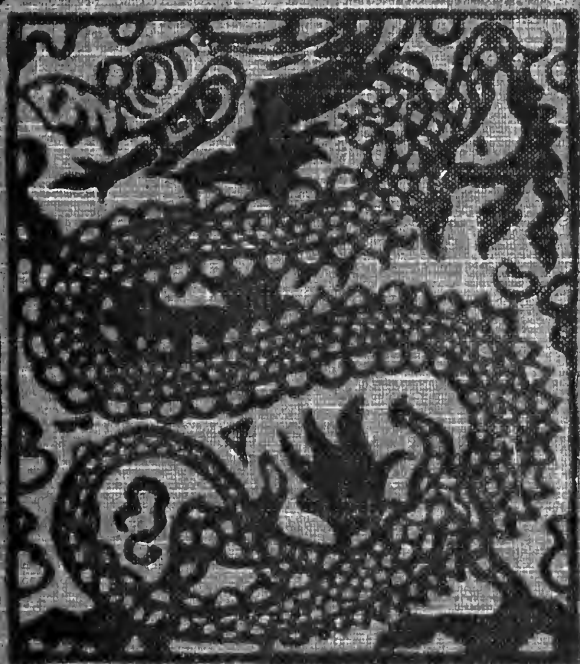


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WORSE



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VERSE AND WORSE






VERSE & WORSE



Selections from
The Writings of
..TVNG-CHIA..

JOHN
(J. O. P. BLAND)
K.  A

With Illustrations
by W. D. Straight.



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TO OVIDE MVSIN A SONNET

PREFACE

Long ago, when the world of letters was young, it was the justifiable custom of an author in his preface to commend his work valiantly to the notice of a limited and unwearied public; having joined the then select fellowship of writers, having achieved something of immortality, it was allowed him to dwell lovingly upon the genesis of his undertaking, and to point out for the benefit of careless or illiterate readers those chief gems of beauty and wisdom to be found within his pages. If, as occasionally happened, his hors d'oeuvre were seasoned with a pinch of modest deprecation, the thing was not seriously meant; rather was it a new and pleasing affectation, as of some fair maid with her lover. Now, assuredly, have the times changed, and with them the mutual relation of those who write and those who, as they run, try to read. In these latter days of snippy, scrappy journalism, of monster editions and literary prodigies innumerable, there would seem to be real danger that in our literary playbooth most of what was once the audience will soon be upon the stage, and the craft itself perish under the weight of those who strive to practice it. For, in the ever-growing press of chorons and supers struggling towards the glare of the footlights of fame, how shall any voices, even of those cast to be "dramatis personae," reach further than the first attentive row of stalls, if haply so far?

Therefore, because of the endless making of books which are born to-day and perish unheeded to-morrow, the ancient, pleasing and intimate fashion of the preface has fallen greatly into disuse. Where all is done, reading and writing alike, in the slipshod hurry of modernity, your deliberate foreword is but waste of time. "Get on with the story, sir, let it be

“served hot from the press and seasoned to the taste of a jaded palate.—What need have we of your views on the methods and objects of literature? Have we not been told in the monthly magazines all about your domestic affairs: we know what dogs you keep, what flowers you grow, and how your wife does her hair? Let that suffice.”

Nevertheless, where the preface still lingers, it is to be observed that nowadays its chief use is to plead some excuse in extenuation of the crime which adds one more to the enormities of publishers; and rightly so, for in itself the thing requires apology and defence. There have not been wanting certain misguided persons to advance the comfortable creed of “every man his message,” justifying each and all in adding to the general clamour of tomes and alleging that in every work, however witless, paltry or bad, there lies, for those who seek diligently, some inner kernel of good. The modern preface has readily adopted this creed. In the scurry and press of the market-place your average maker of books no longer bestrides his tub loudly vaunting his wares; rather he takes you aside in mendicant style, plucking timidly at your sleeve for notice.

Happy, under such conditions, he who far from the busy hum of crowded marts, finds in some wayside hostelry a band of pilgrims journeying his own road, good companions, cheery fellows, ready and willing to welcome any tale or song that shall lighten to-day’s weariness or to-morrow’s cares. For such an one, “longer journey, better friends;” his tales, however simple, require no excuse; his songs, artless though they be, meet with the guerdon of a smile. Both are remembered in the years to come by kindly souls at winter firesides, when the erstwhile pilgrims have returned from exile to their own kind. Better far such hearers than those who come and go, without largesse, in the market place; better for audience and teller those tales which bear on matters common and familiar, everyday words of things seen by the wayfarer on paths remote from the world’s great highways.

Such good fortune, reader, is mine; here, amongst intimates, to follow wayfarers of a long road of exile, my tale is of things seen by the way, told to those for whom each name and place brings back memories of past years, echoes of

laughter or tears. Therefore, by this preface, I proclaim that, in such company, no apology is needed for the making of my book.

We are here to-day, a few white men uneasily perched on the fringe of the Yellow Man's Asia. All our commercialism, our wars, our diplomacy, and our adventurers have made but little mark on the celestial race in fifty years: he were a bold man who should prophecy what the White Man will be doing in China fifty years hence. It pleases me to think—and may it not be?—that, what time Macaulay's New Zealander stands pensive amidst the ruins of London, some Mongolian savant, happily unearthing this book, shall rejoice therein to find an authentic record of our European Settlements, long since swallowed up and forgotten. I rejoice to believe that the civilised Mongolian of futurity may find something to admire in the mind and manners of our Treaty Ports.

Most of "Verse and Worse" has already been published in one place or another; some in the "Rattle" some in the "North China Daily News" and some in home papers; but the illustrations, by an artist new to the Far Eastern public, will, I venture to think, afford in themselves a sufficient source of pleasure for readers to whom parts of the text may be no new thing.



Shanghai,

July, 1902.



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FOR ENGLAND

[AT A TIME OF GRACEFUL CONCESSIONS, A.D. 1898]

Far North, where the sea lies frozen
To the edge of the Monkden sands,
Southwards, to Shantung hamlets
And rice-fed river lands ;
South still, to the great Pearl River
Where mast lies close to mast,
The tale is spreading swiftly
That England's day is past !

The Peiho trackers tell it
When South winds fill the sail,
'Tis borne by Kalgan's camel-men
Who take the Kiachta trail :

The Yangtze gorges hear it
In the jests of a lorch'a's crew,
And Shameen's painted flower-girls
Have sworn that it is true.

Beside the midnight fires
Of Lhassa's caravan,
By lonely mountain passes
On the trade-routes of Yünnan
The tale is swiftly spreading,
By every tribe 'tis told,
That England is no longer
As England was of old.

The Lion's power is broken —
The East no longer fears
That mighty name which held it
In leash for fifty years,
Hath not the Yamên's whisper
Been shouted from the wall —
"The Lion hath been ridden
By the Muscovite and Gaul ?"



Their fathers still remember
The Viceroy's plundered nest,
What time the British clippers
Came sailing from the West.
Ay, those who now forget it
Learned on their mother's knees
That of the great the greatest
Was she who ruled the seas.

They know who roused all China
From long unbroken sleep,
Who ploughed the first deep furrows
That centuries shall reap.
Canton has not forgotten
The days of thirty-nine,
And Anting's plain still bears the mark
Of England's "thin red line."

Ay, they have heard the echoes
Of Britain's old-time fame,
But gone is now the magic
Of that once-dreaded name ;
The Lion's day is over—
Have they not seen and heard ?
Behold, he falters, and obeys
The Tamer's whip and word !

* * * * *

Now wake thee, wake thee, England
Thine hour all swiftly flies ;
If Asia lightly hold us
Our Empire surely dies !
Why guard we still the passes
In far-off Malakand,
If here, in farthest Asia,
They do not understand ?

Here, by the great Pacific,
The seeds of strife are sown ;
Here, with firm hand and ready
Must England hold her own.
Let Europe wipe Mahommed
From her defiled soil,
Not there, but here in Asia
Shall be our sorest toil.

Now stand the nations waiting
From Seoul to Samarkand,
And hushed, fore the coming tempest,
Lies all their cowering land ;
They wait a sign, a master,
As waits the wandering herd ;
Now for her mighty birthright,
Shall England speak no word ?

Shall we gaze on our own undoing
While home-reared talkers prate ?
Shall their " creed of conciliation "
Make us, or keep us great ?
Peace ?—Ay, but " peace with honour "
Our watchword was of yore ;
And we left " conciliation "
For those who dared no more.

Naught recks the Asiatic
Of diplomatic creeds
Or European " concerts "—
He judges us by deeds ;
The race that bears it proudest,
Nor stops to parley long,
That saith " Thus far, no farther ! "
Is strongest of the strong.

Breathless the East hath waited
 To hear the word of Fate,
 Afghan and Sikh and Goorhka
 And Burman hill-tribes wait ;
 Now if to speak we dare not,
 To do great deeds we lack,
 Then better were each Briton
 Upon the homeward track.

Southwards the Czar's grey legions
 Like swelling tide advance ;
 Northwards, and ever nearer,
 The tricolour of France ;
 And still the tale is speeding,
 By every tribe 'tis told,
 That England is no longer
 As England was of old.

The Peiho trackers tell it
 When south winds fill the sail,
 'Tis borne by Kalgan's camel-men
 Who take the Kiachta trail ;
 The Yangtze gorges hear it
 In the jests of a lorcha's crew -
 England, awake and answer !
 Prove now the tale untrue !







“THE SAME NIGHT MARSHAL WANG DINED WITH HENG.”

AN EXTINCT SCIENCE

In the year B.C. 2000, or thereabouts, there was no such thing in the Far East as the "fortune of war"—at least, not in the sense in which we use the phrase to-day. There were fortunes in war, as will presently be seen; but its glorious uncertainties, its reverses and surprises, had ceased to exist. The winning and losing of battles had been reduced to the simplicity of a multiplication sum, all of which was due to the genius of one great man, General Wang, to wit, Field-Marshal of the forces of his Majesty Chang Wu, King of the Hans.

At that period China was divided, like Gaul, into three parts, and ruled by three dynasties known respectively as the Han, the Wei and the Wu. Buffer states were unknown in those good old days, and the three kingdoms aforesaid were always in a healthy state of active hostility. And as it invariably happened that when any one of them got the better of another, the third would "chip in" and reverse the situation, the balance of power was in a chronic condition of wobble; which state of things was good for all parties, keeping the people occupied and saving their three rulers from *eunuchs*, a complaint which frequently proved fatal in those pre-dynamite and-new-woman days.

Such was the condition of affairs when Wang Sun-ki passed his final examination in archery and shouting, and became a corporal in the bodyguard of his Majesty Chang Wu. From the very first—so say the commentators, his great mind grasped the idea of a radical reform in the art of war. He saw clearly in the strategy and tactics of the day many glaring defects, and to the inauguration of the system which was to make him famous he devoted all his splendid energies.

His rise was very rapid—partly, as is often the case with great commanders, by what we call luck, partly by help and favour of lovely woman, but chiefly through his own prudence and strength of mind. For, by careful avoidance of all dangerous posts, and by exceeding swiftness of foot, he preserved

for his country a life that he knew to be worth more to him than that of any other man; never, even in the prospect of battle, did this great soldier forget his plans so far as to risk his person.

His first notable achievement was his marriage with Ling Mei, sister of one of the unclassified or miscellaneous ladies who basked in the sunshine of Chang Wu's Court. Through the influence of this model wife, Wang, now a Captain of Cavalry, became versed in all the details of his sovereign's life, and was soon able to place the usual bribes and *douceurs* with the very best effect. When, after remarkably rapid promotions and unbroken service at headquarters, he became *Aide-de-camp* to his Majesty and full Colonel of the Royal Catapulters, it is recorded that he divorced the lady Ling Mei "for having become garrulous," and immediately afterwards married one of the numerous Princesses Royal—a lady with some wealth, a deal of acidity and a squint—which self-denial meets with much praise of the commentators. At this period our gallant Colonel began to find again the bread which he had cast upon the waters of his youth: where heretofore he had bribed others he now found his own palm frequently and pleasantly greased; so much so, indeed, that he rapidly became a capitalist and landed proprietor.

It was at this point of his career that there began to flow the tide in his affairs which was to lead him on to fortune and eternal fame. Just as the squint and humours of his Princess Royal were commencing to tell seriously on his nerves, causing him unpleasant doubts and qualms as regards the "sacking" of Ling Mei, tidings reached the Court of the advance of a large army from the Wu frontiers. This in itself was bad enough, but when it became known that the King of Wei had made a formal declaration of neutrality, things began to look serious.

For it was only three years before that the joint forces of Han and Wei had invaded the Wu territories, exacted heavy penalties, and bound over the turbulent king thereof to keep the peace; and it had been solemnly agreed in the resultant treaty that the rulers of Han and Wei should be as brothers for ever—both being, at that particular time, weaker than the King of Wu.

Here, then, was treachery and intrigue, and a prospect of much fighting, and our gallant Wang found himself suddenly ordered from the squint of his inamiable Princess to the command of the Han force in the field—found himself, moreover, decorated with a peacock's plume and wearing the pipe and tinder-box of a Field-Marshal.

Now, as the reader will have observed, the great genius of Marshal Wang had not, so far, developed itself in the stress and turmoil of battles. Rather had it been shown in a wonderful capacity for circumventing his fellow-men in times of profound peace. His nomination to the leadership of the Han army is, therefore, regarded by the shrewdest of the commentators as the joint work of his Majesty Chang Wu—with a covetous eye on the reversion of Wang's real and personal estate—and of the lady Wang, tired of her lord's marked aversion to squints.

Behold, therefore, our Field-Marshal at the head of his army, riding in state on an ambling jennet, his head protected from the sun by the red umbrella of honour. Around him are gathered his lieutenants and a body-guard of athletes and acrobats. For miles behind, and straggling over the fields on either side, his "braves" are making their way, in extremely loose order, towards the Wu frontier. Each man carries his weapon in one hand and an umbrella in the other, for it is the rainy season and showers are frequent. An imposing sight is the departure of this great army: the citizens stand on the walls and cheer lustily as regiment upon regiment straggles over the ploughed country, looking for all the world like a caucous-race.

Slower and slower ambles the fat jennet as the city walls fade in the distance. The great chief is lost in thought in the first throes of that tremendous conception which is soon to revolutionise war. At the midday hour, on the edge of a pine forest, he commands a halt, and here, while dinner is being prepared, he orders that the army be drawn up in hollow square, from the centre of which he will address it. Such is the intimation conveyed by the herald and gong-beaters; and soon the smoke of five thousand rice-pots is curling upwards on the soft spring air.

And now the immortal Wang, with his jade spectacles on his nose and the peacock's plume proudly waving, is

mounted on the roof of a sedan-chair. Behind him the trumpets sound a war-note, and immediately the whole camp is hushed. So still is all that vast host you could hear a baby cry.

"Men of Han," said the great commander, "the campaign on which we are now setting out is no ordinary one; it is for you and me to make it ever memorable! It is, I believe, our common object to keep the enemy's forces from invading our territories, from marrying our wives and enslaving our children; and a secondary aim is ours in the desire to come out of this war with our persons undamaged and our pockets heavy. (Applause.) But, as I look upon your honest faces, I am thoroughly convinced that the army with which I am told to 'do or die' is totally unable to face the Wu forces with any sort of credit. Your numbers are insufficient, your weapons beneath contempt and your commissariat does not exist. (Groans.) All these faults, my friends, are due to the administration of military affairs by civilians." (A voice from the ranks: "Let us go back.")

"No, friends, we will not go back, for that way lies dishonour; before us are wealth and honour and a ripe old age." Here the Field-Marshal resorted to his silver snuff-bottle, and all the army breathed deep in expectation.

"As I have said," he continued, "your appearance is such as to convince me of your utter inability to fight, and my experience teaches me that you would never wait to do so. That discretion for which my troops have ever been famous would lead you to out-manœuvre the foe by strategic and rapid movements to the rear. You would return to your own homes, and I would be left to do the same, with the inevitable prospect of explaining affairs to an irate Sovereign, which would be very unpleasant for all of us. Therefore, oh! men of Han, thank Heaven that it has sent you a chief capable of leading you to certain and painless victory. Eat your fill of rice to-day, and to-morrow go forward, leaving the issues of this war with me alone. They have told us to do or die. I think I am right in saying that we unanimously choose the former alternative. Let us therefore resolve to 'do'—(A voice: "What?")—to 'do' that civil administration which is the cause of all a soldier's trials and dangers!" (Great applause, then silence.)

"I see, friends, that you do not grasp my meaning. I am glad of it. All I now ask of you is that no man of you shall start for home during the next forty-eight hours. I myself guarantee your personal safety—on my red button be it!—but any premature desertion will upset all my plans. Let us but come in sight of the enemy and you may leave the rest to me. And, friends, meanwhile let our watchword be 'do—not die!'"

After which oration the Field-Marshal remounted his ambling steed, camp was struck (it was the only thing struck during the campaign), and the army straggled cheerfully towards the frontier. Such was the combined effect of the speech and a plentiful meal that several regiments sang as they marched.

The commentators rival each other in enlogising Wang's grasp of the situation and of his appreciation of the material at his command. It was the practice in those days for the weaker army to march to within shouting distance of the enemy, at which point every man would discharge his weapon, throw it away, and flee for home as best he could. How different to such conventional and dangerous tactics were the methods of the immortal Wang! Has not his famous watchword, "do—not die," become proverbial throughout all Cathay? Is it not always in use by the makers of rhymed couplets?

The army had advanced two days' march—about six miles—since the making of the great speech; its soothing effect had thus partly worn off when the elephants at the head of the Wu vanguard appeared in a valley beneath it. The Hans gazed in silence as the enemy's forces wound their way like a gigantic snake round the base of the opposite hills; and the habits of their old military training came strongly upon them. "If we shout from here," said a bronzed veteran, "surely they can hear us. And what place could be better for discharging our weapons?" The impulse spread like wild fire, and scarce a man in all that vast host but thought with joy of seeing his home again before the rising of another sun.

They had forgotten their chief. Thoughtfully gazing on the enemy below, that great man sat erect in his saddle, heedless of all around. Silent he sat "as on a peak in Darien."

until his well-trained eye detected the commander of the Wu forces in his usual place at the extreme rear. Then, turning in his stirrups, he spoke to his body-guard or rather, to that place where, had discipline prevailed, the body-guard should have been.

"Summon me a herald," he cried, "and call hither my treasurer and the chief scribe, for with these I will go down into the valley. You, my brave fellows, will wait here. Should the enemy cross yonder stream, you are at liberty to follow your own instincts and knowledge of the country; but if not, I shall expect every man to be here when I return—it will go ill with you, my friends, if my expectations are not fulfilled."

A shout of approval went up, for the terms were easy. This was an entirely new departure in warfare. Few expected to see their General again this side the grave, and still fewer believed him able to persuade the enemy to remain on the further side of the stream. Therefore the army gathered itself joyfully about the rice-cauldrons and prepared to enjoy a day of rest, husbanding their energies for a night of flight. A trumpeter only remained on the hill-top to watch the enemy and give a signal when the river should be crossed.

Field-Marshal Wang, with herald, scribe, and treasurer, all clean shaven and in full uniform, rode therefore to meet the Wu army—a proceeding totally without precedent, and not to be found in the Treatises on War. They carried no weapons, nor (with the exception of Wang's insignia) valuables of any kind; all these had been left with the field-chest in charge of the Field-Marshal's own relatives and retainers, with orders to make straight for the house of Wang in case of an advance of the enemy.

The Field-Marshal rode light and without misgivings. If he died, he had effected an insurance—so to speak—on his life; if he lived, fame and fatness were his assuredly.

In this wise they came therefore within three bow-shots of the Wu vanguard, which, seeing what it mistook for an approach of cavalry, promptly fell back on the main body. Some confusion resulted which might easily have ended in a panic, had not Wang, with keen military insight, understood the position. Immediately he dispatched the herald to proclaim that the Field-Marshal of the Hans, unarmed and unsupported,

desired an interview with the Wu Commander-in-Chief. No sooner was this message understood than the army rallied, and the four envoys found themselves prisoners. Their persons were searched and treated with some want of courtesy, their lack of valuables being unfavourably criticised. All this Wang had expected; with composure he witnessed the removal of his peacock's leather, tinderbox and ambling jennet. All he asked was an interview with the Commander-in-Chief, and he awaited with admirable composure the arrival of that dignitary.

The details of that interview have never been made public, but its results were the fulfilling of all Wang's hopes and the dawn of China's modern system of warfare. Before nightfall the Wu forces were in full retreat towards their frontier, carrying with them not only the war-chest (two million taels of silver), but many weapons, flags and uniforms belonging to the army of his Majesty Chang Wu; also that same evening Field-Marshal Wang, having recovered his personal property, encamped his forces in that pleasant valley, and dispatched messengers in haste to the capital with news of a great victory.

His dispatches, still preserved in the national archives, are masterpieces of their kind, and have since been the type for all such documents, even unto the present day. Seated luxuriously on a soft-cushioned divan, our hero wrote in flowery, classic style of stricken fields and horrid deeds of blood; with the peaceful voices of his happy "braves" in his ears he recorded their terrible slaughter and the first hardwon fight. And while graphically describing to his King the scene and details of his victory, he sent in token thereof five banners, two hundred archalists, and an elephant, abandoned (for value received) by the Wu army in its retreat.

The first despatch ends as follows:—

"The enemy, your Majesty, is now in full retreat for the hilly country towards Wingtaishan, and thither we shall pursue and harass him forthwith. One or two more victories and the King of Wu is a suppliant at your Majesty's feet. Before anything further can be done, however, our funds must be replenished. The expenses in this campaign are peculiarly heavy. Your army, more numerous than ever before in the

field, needs a generous commissariat, and the country is extremely poor. It will be necessary to buy horses and equip a force of cavalry, etc. Therefore your servant prays that a sum of at least five million taels be sent under reliable escort to the front with as little delay as possible."

Here follows a list of the killed and wounded, together with recommendations for honours and promotion, in which latter the herald, scribe, and treasurer are honourably prominent.

That same night, having sent off his dispatches, Field-Marshal Wang dined with Hung, Commander-in-Chief of the Wu Army, at a little inn some three miles from the scene of their first meeting. Here, under a trellised vine, the Generals discussed their evening meal and the coming campaign. "Fair play and a clean divide," were Hung's terms; "turn and turn about for victory; a long war, and profits shared." Which was precisely the way in which Wang had already solved the matter.

Over a second bottle of *samsu* they arranged the details; the management of the troops, who were to be well paid, refused furlough, and encouraged to marry and settle down; the treatment of messengers, heralds, and war correspondents, who must either be bought or sold; the necessity for removing the seat of war to a point far away from both capitals—these and other minor matters were soon amicably arranged. And as the two Generals bade each other good-night over a last cup, it is recorded that Hung fell on his knees before the illustrious Wang and *kotowed*. "That makes eight millions to begin with," he said, "and this is our first. You are the greatest soldier that ever lived!"

We need not follow the progress of that campaign. Removed to the borders of the Wei territory, the fortune of war ebbed and flowed for three years, both sides claiming frequent (and expensive) victories. At the end of that time the civilian population of both countries was practically (an inkling of the art of war having leaked out) deserting trade for a military career by thousands. At this period, moreover, the troops of Wei, having gradually perceived the immense advantages of Wang's tactics, took the field of their own accord against the combined forces of Han and Wu. These latter, having after successive victories remitted all their

arms, elephants, and *impedimenta* to each other's emperors, were not in a fit state to resist an attack; besides which, the greater part of both armies had accumulated money, settled down, and begun to provide themselves with heirs. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to accede to the terms imposed by the Wei leaders, especially as these were not difficult. The Wei General reported a victory over the allied forces of Han and Wu, asked for funds to continue the campaign, and joined the enemy. The operation, in fact, was equivalent to what in these days we call "watering the stock" and increasing the number of shareholders.

Such was the nine years' war, the first and only campaign in which our great Field-Marshal ever took part. It ended in the declaration of a general peace—which proved to be the beginning of hostilities—a declaration brought about not because the armies wanted it, but because the rest of the population did. From that day to this the system and tactics of the immortal Wang have been closely followed by every Chinese general with few variations.

And, as one of the commentators aptly asks: "What method could possibly be better? By this system you see large numbers of violent men constrained to peaceful days and provided with a livelihood. Difficult questions are thus settled, not by bloodshed and tears, but by lapse of days and friendly agreement. Finally, the kingly greed of glory is harmlessly satisfied, while the people are kept in a state of healthy excitement. Rightly did the illustrious Wang gain a place in our *Pantheon*!"

* * * *

In the war which China waged against Japan, it was with the greatest pain and surprise that her generals found their system of classical warfare unknown to the Japanese—or, at all events, unpractised by them. So keenly did they feel on this subject, and so unwilling were they to depart from established custom, that the whole Chinese army—generals, corporals and privates—preferred rather to give up their profession than continue a war on the lines adopted by the enemy. "There is no money in it," they said, "and very considerable personal risk."

The reader has, therefore, only to remember this fact to understand the Japanese victory at Pingyang. On that glorious day, out of 20,000 Chinese in action, 16,000 were made prisoners and 3,984 escaped to the hills, the fate of the remaining sixteen being uncertain. If they were killed it was certainly through no fault of theirs, but through ignorance of the range of modern musketry.



LAUGHING LOH

(Lines Dedicated to THE MITCHELL CLUB, with
apologies to the shade of T. Campbell)



Ye merchants of old England,
— That ship to China seas,
Whose trade has suffered fifty years'
Obstruction, fraud, and squeeze,
Now gird ye cunningly again
To meet another foe,
For that deep, artful sweep,
"Sir Chih Chen," Lo Feng-loh,
With speeches full of unctuous guile
Is chortling, laughing Loh.

The spirits of your fathers,
Where'er they be, shall rave,
Elgin and "Pam" and Harry Parkes
Turn each within his grave;
The hard-won pledge, the precious
right,

Fast by your board, they go,
While that deep, artful sweep,
"Sir Chih Chen," Lo Feng-loh,
With oily tongue in ample cheek
Sits chortling, laughing Loh

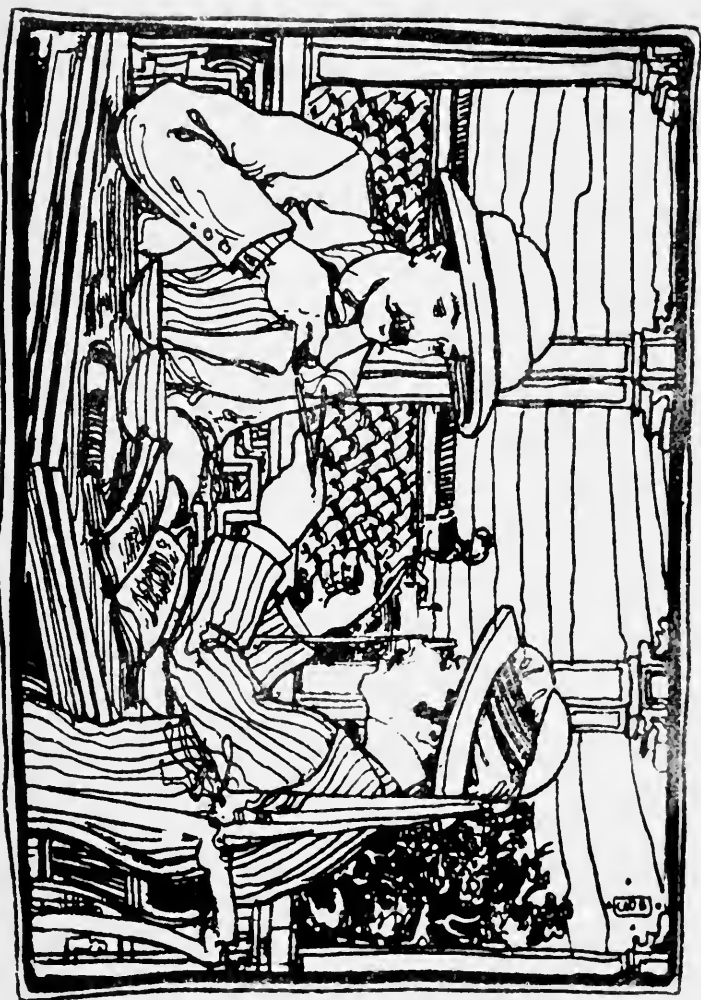
The meteor flag of England
Shall strain and toil no less
Because of all your banquets
And a sycophantic press
Oh, ye that roll the China log,
For Heaven's sake, go slow !
Or that deep, artful sweep,
"Sir Chih Chen," Lo Feng-loh,
At your expense and with your help,
Will queer us, laughing Loh.

JAMES PORSON, GLOBE-TROTTER

I had several objections to Porson, but it was the 'ricksha episode that broke me up. He was an average specimen of his class, stuffed with the usual assortment of preconceived ideas, eager to enlighten the world, and possessed of £10,000 a year and half-a-dozen assorted British fads. Happily he was only here a few hours—those hours which are granted to Canadian Pacific passengers for a run ashore; but in that time he compiled a pretty general history of China and a fine sweeping criticism of European life at the Treaty Ports. Also he reduced me to a state bordering on coma. I knew what to expect when he loomed casually into my office with a large green umbrella in one hand and a letter, addressed to me, in the other—the letter being from Snoddles of Manchester. I occasionally get a small commission from Snoddles, but from the fact of his sending me Porson I infer that he does not consider the commission sufficiently earned. That is as it may be—but I hope soon to cheer Snoddles with a globe-trotter of my own careful choosing. Of course I gave up my day's work for Porson and took him around to see all the hideous things that globe-trotters have to look at—theatres, opium-dens, bath-houses, tea-shops and the Mixed Court (where he gave the Magistrate his card and a pamphlet on vivisection).

The man was bursting with pamphlets, circulars and his own importance; and the amount of useful advice that he wasted on me with regard to our treatment of the natives was simply appalling. I only wish that two or three of the City Fathers had come along to learn how the thing should really be done. At twelve o'clock, after visiting a native Beggars' Home, I (feeling faint as to my vitals) suggested a cocktail at the Club, and tiffin. But Porson turned on me the vials of a total abstainer's scorn and insisted on a Chinese meal at a native restaurant. There I had the pleasure of seeing him wield a proud pair of delirious chopsticks and smear half his person with what he believed to be typical Chinese dishes—which they weren't; of course he could have had a knife and

"POIRSON INSISTED ON A CHINESE MEAL AT A NATIVE RESTAURANT."



fork for the asking. Porson, in striped knickerbockers, with a pug-garred sunhat and two guide books, eating sardines with a chopstick: the whole world could not provide him with a better frontispiece for his impending book!

But after this feast of reason I insisted on taking him out into the country, far from the smell of Chinese life. We went in 'rickshas, for it had not occurred to Porson (and his £10,000 a year) to hire a carriage, and I, though he calls me a plutocratic satrap, can't afford one. So we crawled out together as far as the Country Club,—Porson extracting from me *en route* facts (and fiction) concerning the opium trade and female infanticide. But when we got there he wouldn't even look at it; said he belonged to the Athenæum or some such place, and hadn't come to the East to look at European clubs—and something more about their all being pot-houses anyway.

As he scorned the Country Club I offered to take him to the Canton Cemetery or the Sinza Wash-houses, these being the next best things to be seen and more in his line. But the native tiffin had been playing the devil with his inside, and he was possessed of a fierce desire for tea—which he proposed to satisfy by returning to my humble abode. I can't say that I even tried to look sorry (for Porson is the sort of man that lives until somebody in desperation knocks him on the head) and a vision of "something cold" loomed up in my mind's eye larger than his brew of tea. So we got into our 'rickshas and fared slowly homewards—the human waifs between our shafts were not built for a two-mile radius.

It was when we came to pay off these beasts of burden that Porson broke me up completely. He began by asking me what was the correct fare. "Fifty cents," said I, having just paid my villain that liberal amount. Then he began. He declaimed for ten minutes from my doorstep on what was evidently one of his most virulent fads—said that the European population in China (including me) were vampires and slave-drivers, living by the sweat of the poor. Waving his gingham, he bade me look at our hungry-looking 'ricksha coolies and say whether any man worthy of the name could let himself be dragged by such poor brutes at the rate of threepence an hour. I assured such him that my tame 'ricksha

man, a most respectable person, did not earn more, and that a London 'bus would carry me better for less money. Porson wouldn't listen: he was in his best County Council form and talked on, rapidly collecting a crowd. He was great on the degradation of man by man, and said he looked forward to the day when the down-trodden coolie should name his own terms with every bloated capitalist in the East. Finally, and as a fitting climax, he gave his down-trodden one five dollars—or, as he put it in his accursed monometallic jargon, ten shillings. Now, I didn't mind his chucking his money about, but I have reason to resent the version of the incident which was spread about the Club by a particular friend of mine, who said he had heard Porson's speech. Naturally my 'ricksha man came back with his fifty cents and began to raise the very dence—at which the crowd jeered—until Providence sent me a brilliant idea. I told him that the \$5 were a *cumshaw*, to be divided between them. The result of this stratagem was as I had ventured to hope, for in two minutes the pair of wretched brutes were tied up in a writhing knot on the pavement, gouging at each other's eyes. From the verandah I showed Porson the closing scene of his little drama—with a certain amount of unholy joy—both coolies being led off to Hongkew by the strong arm of the law, tied together by their pigtails, and I seized the occasion to warn him against interfering with the equilibrium of local conditions. But Porson has no more use for advice than a pig has for feathers.



BALLADE AUX JAPONAIS

[AFTER THE WAR, 1899]



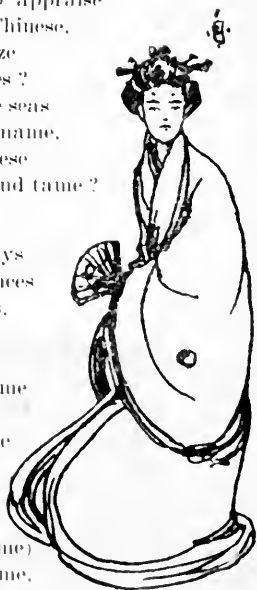
Your wars are over: now to peaceful ways
Ye turn again, oh gentle Japanese,
Rejoicing in the booty and the bays
Won in assaults, excursions and sorties;
But ere ye go, oh tell us, if you please
Before, upon the laurels of your fame,
Ye rest awhile in dignity and ease,
Tell us the meaning of your little game?

Shall we believe the critics who appraise
You only something higher than Chinese,
Or is the Rising Sun about to blaze
Fiercely, and finish all our destinies?
Do you intend to wipe us from the seas
And leave us but the shadow of a name,
Or will ye be once more the Japanese
We used to know—mildly polite and tame?

It would be well to know if now the days
Are come when we should rub our pliant knees
Before *Dai Nippon*, whom the East obeys,
Or whether, on the other hand, all these
Ideas are not a newspaper disease,
And that, despite the shrill-voiced trumpet fame
Of your excursions, sallies and sorties,
We may contrive to live on just the same

Envoi.

Yet, oh Mikado, of your clemencies,
(Whatever may be the meaning of your game)
Grant us each year to wander, just the same,
Where *musumés* linger 'neath the almond trees



A CHINESE BLADE

It is April, and a breath of spring is in the air, even on the dusty Maloo. The teahouse windows are open, and on their balconies sundry customers are enjoying themselves in the stolid manner peculiar to Orientals. By the hour they sit there, watching the passing crowd, noting with unmoved features every detail of the familiar scene; and contentment born of tea, tobacco, and absolute idleness, is theirs. Here and there, in the shops which fringe the footpath, you may catch a glimpse of that native nudity which shall shortly bourgeon forth in its full hideousness—a foretaste of that “naked villainy” to which our eyes shall soon become accustomed. Your sentimental globe-trotter would probably liken it to the first crocuses that buds to welcome spring; but we, jaded of such *exposés*, remembering the hideous torsos and abdomens of the Maloo in summer, greet the untimely vision with anything but pleasure.

From the cook shops comes a blended fragrance of garlic, sesame and soy that hangs heavily on the evening air: a smell which embodies the *motif* of Chinese life, even as that of charcoal, pine-wood and dried fish is typical of Japan. During the winter months it is, so to speak, consumed on the premises; but in summer it comes out, like everything else, into the streets, and we share it (like a good many others) with those to whom it properly belongs.

The chief pastime of the unemployed native at this hour consists in watching the endless procession of carriages and rickshas that rolls and rumbles by. As a rule the sights is sordid and uninteresting enough, but to-day the coming of spring is blazoned forth on every carriage in pink and white; passengers, malfaos, ay, even Rosinante, being decked with branches of cherry, plum and other seasonable blossoms. As I stand at the window of Yung Ling (a curio-dealer whose acquaintance I pay for) the absurdity of this motley apotheosis of spring strikes me keenly—cherry-blossoms and Chinese, surely here is the climax of the ludicrously unfit! And

yet it is only one of the many anomalies which greet us every where in China; not one whit more incongruous, for instance, than the moral maxims and poetical quotations with which Yung Ling adorns his shop or than yonder thrush piping merrily in a tea-house which for squalid ugliness almost realises one's idea of the Inferno. It is all an enigma whose solution lies probably in atavism.

My reflections on plum blossoms are interrupted at this point by the entrance of Li Yang, who, it seems, has looked in to bargain for a certain jade bangle. He is accompanied by a lady. They have evidently been to the Well, for they both carry pink sprigs. Li's being stuck foreign fashion, where a button-hole would be if his button did not fasten with an eye.

Li Yang is a tea broker, ostensibly and in deference to filial piety, but his real object in life is to be a *vivandier*, a gay dog, a blade; to go the pace and to be a byword for devilry in the Foochow Road. I have enjoyed a desultory acquaintance with him for some years, and as a study of modern Chinese manners find him rather interesting. Not that, strictly speaking, he can be called a Chinese



type, but rather a curious and local exotic, sprung from exceptional soil, a purely Shanghai species. Nevertheless in his person, as in his manners, he instinctively adopts those features which are common to the blades of all time; *mutatis mutandis*, his are the airs and graces, the fashionable affectations, of Alcibiades and his revellers; of Sybaris, Euipens and all the "oiled and curled" guests of Maccenas. Despite his pigtail and almond eyes, the instincts which prompt him to rejoice in his ward-robe and to assume that air of weariness unutterable are the same as those which have moved gay cavaliers of St. James's and *petits-maitres* of Versailles, long since gone. Our present Bond Street "masher" and the *fancheur* of Parisian boulevards, these, too, are his cousins and his kindred afar.

Look at him now. He is sauntering round, rolling up his pink satin sleeves to pick up a snuff bottle or a thumb-ring. The fact is significant that etiquette requires even a swell like Li, to roll up his sleeves where valuables are freely exposed. His *nil admirari* attitude is really well sustained—it certainly impresses Yung Ling; nevertheless, I observe that while one eye is on Lalage and her bangle transaction, the other is taking note of the impression made on my humble self. For Li Yang, being in the heyday of bold bladeishness, does not yet affect to despise the foreigner. That will come later.

He has the correct swagger of your literary Chinese, with elbows squared and curious sidelong motion of the hips: his cigar, with its amber mouthpiece, he holds, as all Chinamen do, between forefinger and thumb. Those talon-like fingernails, the turquoise on his cap, the tortoise-shell goggles, all these are the outward signs of "pucka" blades throughout the Empire; but unto them he has added certain foreign touches that make him the hybrid thing he is, to wit, diamond rings, a watch-chain and a riding coat of purple plush that jars harshly on his native satins.

As with his clothes, so with his manners; he is neither flesh, fish, nor good red herring. His father being an official, he apes the literary class, and later on, after much sowing of wild oats, he too will buy himself a button and some books; but at present his ways are anything but literary. He frequents the semi-European restaurants (unholy spots), discar-

ding the chop-sticks of his childhood, and prefers champagne, even at \$12 a dozen, to the good shaoshing of Li Tai-po. He believes in the virtue of black coffee, however vile, as an aid to the consumption of opium, and he has discarded the water-pipe of his fathers for "Pin-head" cigarettes.

Chloe, too, and Lalage follow him willingly on these primrose paths of dalliance, for the Aspasia's of our model settlement are considerably more emancipated than their sisters of the interior. They share the blades' tastes—in addition they have little fashions of their own, such as morphia tablets and foreign knickknacks, and Li Yang, being up-to-date, defies native conventionality by driving with Lalage to the Well, in the sight of all men, and by being frequently photographed in her amiable company. Of these feats he is undoubtedly proud; for do not they proclaim him a Lothario and a very prince of blades?

Lalage has bought her bangle—goodness knows she had enough already!—and her thoughts are now of dinner. So Li Yang, nodding us a nonchalant good night, departs—swaggering as he came. And I am left to reflect how good and true a thing it is that the whirligig of time brings ever its revenges; for the sycee which this gay youth is causing to circulate so freely was wrung, cash by cash, from the vitals of the poor. It was hoarded by his father, in the days when he was Nictai of Chékiang, and every dollar of it represents the untold sorrows of some miserable wretch. Therefore I can only hope that Lalage may do her work so thoroughly that my young friend may eventually be put to it to earn his own rice. But should that day ever come he will make but a sorry blade.





Chips · That · Pass · in · the · Night ·

Oh, chips that pass in the night,
That pass on these midnight "sees,"
Oh, chips that fade from my sight
Swiftly, by twos and threes,
Oh, chips that vanish and glide,
Each with its freight of pain,
Say, on the turning tide,
Will ye come back again?

Red chips, and blue and white,
By the tall bluffs ye go,
Heavy and dark the night,
Whither now speed ye so?
I gaze on the passing decks,
I dwell on the dwindling screw,
Ye pass, like my hopes—ye are distant specks—
Red chips, and white and blue!

Oh, chips, ye have passed in the night,
Passed, like a dream, away,
And now, with a flush, comes the light
Of another, and sadder day,
Ye are gone; not a chip do I see,
And I hear on the banks a moan,
But close at hand there's a sale for me
A sale of my very own.

CONCERNING WATER-MELONS

In the alley of "Everlasting Fragrance" there is joy and feasting, for once more, in the fulness of time, the water-melon comes to relieve the emptiness of man. Pale at its first coming, like the young moon of May, it rises on the expectant horizon of the alley, and the denizens of that unholy spot rejoice; swiftly they hasten to enjoy the rindly fruits of the earth in undue time. Now at the dark portals of the Yung Hsiang Li (which, being interpreted, means "All soap abandon ye who enter here") the groaning barrow stops; and perspiring housewives, forgetting the first principles of thrift, rush eagerly to buy; nor may they return unladen to their dens. By highways and byways, on boat, beast and barrow, converging hither from all points, the savoury gourd is borne,—from distant sunny fields where the hand of man and the virtues of certain agents unspeakable have laboured together unto this end; and already gutters, garbage-carts and festering foreshores bear olfactory testimony to its accomplished task. Nor is other and weightier evidence lacking, for, lo, the voice of the mourner is heard in our midst and man goes to his long home—not fruitlessly perhaps, but withal of melancholy fate. Now, at the street corner, the voice of him who peddles juicy fly-blown segments is fitfully lost in the beating of funeral gongs; and he who eats may, from the tea-house, gaze on the obsequies of him whose last melon is eaten. Each eventide, in the teeming purlieus of "Everlasting Fragrance," the fragrant pulp, chewed even into the first depths of rind, is washed to its place by aerated waters of native (and unpleasant) origin; each August night, in their gruesome garrets, "men sit and hear each other groan"; and forthwith Mongolian souls (such as they are), being loosed from fleshly durance, sit shivering on Styx's bank, haggling with Charon.

Yes, the melon-days, more deadly than melinite, are upon us, and with them a brisk demand sets in for cheap collins. But shall we, in thoughtless haste, revile therefore the succulent spheroid, and deny all virtue to its recurring

melon-drama? Far from it! Lo, to every man cometh his hour, and every cord, be it silver or hempen, must sooner or later be loosed. War, famine, flood, and plague, these be nature's shriller protests against the over-crowding of man; and in the water-melon she only speaks, with kindlier voice, the same message. If, to the philosophic native, the pleasing *quietus* dealt by a summer-day fruit seems better than any of the violent uses of battle, murder and sudden death, far preferable to the misery of old age, shall we, forsooth, blame him? Again, far from it! The water-melon, in its own appointed way is doing useful and necessary work: if black doom lurketh in it, what of that? "Happy," says the poet, "the man who may choose his fate." Let therefore the alley of "Everlasting Fragrance" rejoice and eat freely. For us, we only wish that they might see fit to eat the skins also.





A VOICE FROM THE PIT

When thou art dancing,
Lighter than air,
Vision entrancing,
Elsie Adair!
To me, who sit and sigh
Under thy witching eye,
Thou art a fairy, I
Vow and declare!

While thy feet to and fro
Twinkle and dart
Full of sweet magic, so
Flutters my heart:
Fain would I fly with thee
Over some lonely sea
Such is thy sorcery
Witch that thou art!

And when to-morrow I
Toil at my books,
Or when I'm badgered by
Coolies and cooks,
Such things will softened be
By the mere thought of thee
Of whirling drapery,
Smiles and soft looks,

If I were younger and
Free from all care,
Were my wind stronger and
Had I some hair,
I'd like to follow thee
O'er the wide world, and be
One of thy company,
Elsie Adair!

Now in this heart of mine
Nothing there sticks
But thy soft serpentine
Blazoned with kicks
I were at thy command
Soul, body, heart and hand,
Were I not married, and
Father of six.



NUIT D'ÉTÉ

I am looking out for a house in the country, and the farther out the better, for the Settlement as a summer residence is no place for me. Every night is the same there—a foretaste of purgatory. As an instance, let me recount what I endured last night.

I am a man of quiet habits and a retiring disposition: slightly nervous, perhaps, and easily affected by hot weather, but good-tempered as a rule and reasonable, I hope. I only came out here this spring. My rooms are nice and central, near the Bund; I furnished them myself, with Mrs. Cunynge's help, and my friends are good enough to admire them—especially the Oriental alcove and the artists' proofs. But I've given notice that I'm leaving at the end of the month—if I live till then.

Last night was Saturday. The fact that human nature is at its worst on Saturdays is one of the strongest arguments I know against Sunday, as a British institution. The average bounder, feeling that he is obliged to be respectable on the first day of the week, makes up for it by bounding higher than usual on the last. Then, in addition to its being Saturday, there had been a performance at the theatre—one of your flabby unwholesome modern plays—and if a large part of the audience spent an hour after this production in a futile effort to drown its horrors in bad whisky, I, for one, don't blame them. But the results had hardly a soothing effect on a man whose windows were perforce open to every wind of heaven.

All night long the sound of uncertain footsteps came from the echoing street, together with snatches of song and confidences not meant for the public ear ; one friend of mine I heard assuring two fellow roysterers that his wife was a woman of no importance, and further (in mandolin song) that her golden hair was hanging down her back—both of which statements he volunteered for the information of a dozen households at least. And his was a mild case.

But to begin at the beginning of a night of horrors. At eleven o'clock, having some previous experience of Saturdays, I read the latest production of the Bimetallic League, without flinching, from beginning to end. Usually I find these libubrations invaluable as soporifics, though extremely unpleasant to take. On this occasion, however, I might as well have read something interesting, for Tompkins, who lives in the rooms next mine, had brought in a few friends for a game of whist (or poker), and their various emotions found vent as the game proceeded in much noise and popping of corks. This fact, brought home to me just as I had finished my Bimetallic penance, was not calculated to soothe ; but reflecting kindly on the boyhood of boys, I lit a fresh cigar, took down my Shelley and prepared to sit them out. It was a hot night and I was not sleepy yet. Opening the book at random, I read :—

“ The murmuring of summer seas
And pattering rain and breathing dew
And airs of evening ”

Whew ! Anything but that. Outside, the ceaseless rumble of carriages, laden with Chinese returning from carousals at the Well ; inside, Tompkins' party, with clamour of victor and victim. No time nor place this for Ariel's wooing of Miranda. Try again :—

“ I rise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night
When the winds are breathing low ”

Bah ! A ghastly mockery lurked in every page ! The first sweet sleep of night, forsooth, and winds breathing low !

They would have to howl to get a hearing in this street. Was there on more virtue in the poet? nothing but bitterness left in the honied cup? It seemed so:—

“ When I arose and saw the dawn
I sighed for thee ”

It was no use: the fiends were in it. If one arose at dawn in this neighbourhood it would most likely be to sigh for a policeman. Shelley went to his shelf again and I to bed. Above, the game of cards continued: below, the victorias rattled and bumped: and neither were rubber-tired.

So I put out the lights and crawled beneath the mosquito-net, prepared to lie clammy and wakeful till such time as the drowsy god might be wooed. But of course there was the usual mosquito inside and of course I lit my candle and pursued him. After half an hour's excitement and violent perspiration he died by ordeal of fire, but not before I had burned a six-inch hole in the net. This meant getting up and stuffing a towel in the breach, and by the time I had done it I will admit that my temper was showing signs of wear and tear.

I was just dozing off, I believe, when the Tompkins party broke up—and broke me up. They came out on the landing in a body saying “good night,” in hideous irony, just outside my door. There they lingered, discussing the elements of good and bad luck, for ten minutes or more, until I coughed loudly and said “damn,” when they kindly left the house to darkness and to me.

But only the house—for my backyard had other guests, to wit the common or garden cat of both sexes, and this fact was now proclaimed by a very Tophet of unholy noise. To my unstrung nerves it seemed as if every feline in Shanghai were on the tiles, for love or war, under my windows. To lie passive was out of the question. Therefore I lit my candle once more, seized an empty beer bottle, and thus armed, strove from my verandah to pierce the Stygian gloom of the courtyard below. At last I made out a dark shadow gliding between the flower pots, and thereat Bass's empty pint flew swiftly. I may have hit Grimalkin—of that I know nothing—but certainly with a fragment I smote Tompkins' coolie, who

was sleeping *al fresco*, after the manner of his kind. The yell he gave was enough to raise the dead; and the wound cost me two dollars to-day.

That was at one o'clock. From half-past one till two I slept—a fitful, uneasy sleep, full of dreams, wherein I was stuffing dead cats into the holes of a mosquito-net and Tompkins was talking Bimetallism with a *musumé* and a 'riesha man. After a while they got angry over it—as usual—and began to yell at each other, and then I awoke to find a frightful row going on in the street under my windows. It was the usual thing; two native women, late wanderers of the night, arguing with their 'riesha coolies concerning the lawful amount payable as fares, and it was conducted in the usual manner. The four were standing close together and not another soul was in sight, but the women were squealing at the top of their raucous voices and the men's arguments were shouted as if to a passing ship. For ten minutes the clamour raged and waxed, the lonely street echoing with all manner of Oriental Billingsgate; then I arose once more and laid hands on a dish of hard apricots, as the missiles nearest in space. I looked out on the vile quartet—hoping against hope for that rare bird of the night, a policeman. But in vain; the majesty of the law was soundly sleeping in some snug place of its own; only a couple more 'rieshas came from the Bund anxious no doubt to join in anything that might vary the monotony of their vigils.

My first apricot fell short, but the next caught one of the ladies in the neck and interrupted her flow of argument, and two more proved effective on the coolies. But effective in one sense only; for perceiving the nature of my armoury, both coolies and Dulcinens proceeded to pick them up and to eat them on the spot; while in a moment, and from every point of the compass, countless coolies appeared on the scene and scrambled for my fruit on the kerbstone. In ten minutes the street was full of them, searching by the light of their red lanterns for my largesse in the gutter and clamouring loudly for more.

This was too much for a sorely-tried temper, and, adding my voice to the turmoil, I yelled for the police—which of course was foolish of me, besides being useless. I hadn't called

twice before a figure appeared at a window opposite, and a surly voice wanted to know what the deuce was the matter; who wanted police and what for? Before I had time to answer, somebody knocked at my door—Tompkins, of course, armed with his Light-horse sword—and asked the same question. And when I told him he only swore, said I was a "bally griffin" and asked me as a personal favour to go to bed and stay there. And of course I forgot to tell him what I thought of his card parties.

This morning I have received a letter from the head of the police—if the police can be said to have any head—asking me to be so good as to desist from throwing food to the natives from my windows at night, "such action being calculated to disturb the quiet of the neighbourhood and to increase the work of the police in keeping order." It would be easier to accomplish the latter feat than the former, and at first I was going to write and say so; but on second thoughts I have decided to treat the matter with the silent contempt it deserves, and to leave this quiet neighbourhood and its watchful guardians to their own devices in future. At the end of the month I move; better far all the evils of Bubbling Well rusticity than to dwell any longer in the midst of these nightly alarms.



TO PHYLLIDA

(BY SPECIAL MESSENGER)

Last night I dreamed, sweet Phyllida, of thee ;
Nay, is that strange ? Think, love, that we did part
But yesternoon, and every hour my heart
Dwells only on thy beauty's memory.
This, dearest, was my dream :—

By wooded edge

Of slumbering noonday stream, where laden bees
Made drowsy melody, and willow trees
Stooped low to hear the murmuring of the sedge.
Our boat was moored. Together, side by side,
Through the brief glory of one summer's day,
We sat ; and the sweet breath of clovered hay
Came on the breeze from new-mown meadows wide.

And there I read to thee the wondrous song
Of Lancelot and the lily-maid, Elaine,
Till on our summer stream there lived again
The Court of Camelot and Arthur's throng.
Thy face was near to mine (alas, fond dream !)
And, as I read, by kindly zephyr's freak,
A little curl fell lightly on my cheek—
A little gossamer curl of sunlight gleam.

And then—ah, then—the lily-maid, Elaine,
Passed like an old-time story, idly told,
And I, at touch of that soft curl grown bold,
Kissed thy sweet lips and told thee yet again
Another tale of love.

Ah, swift-winged dream !

Yet, Phyllida, the summer's noon is fair ;
Idle our boat. Braid, if thou must, thine hair,
But come with me on yonder slumbering stream.

CONCERNING NECKTIES

With the return of autumn and cool weather there come back to us many of the unconsidered trifles that make life comfortable and pleasant : many things which in the old country we enjoy all the year round, forgetting thus their benefits. It is while we perspire here in a temperature and *milieu* for which we were never by nature intended that we first perceive clearly the virtues of those aids to existence which the civilised man in temperate climes has come to regard as necessities, but from which we have cut ourselves off, for three months in the year, by associating with a thermometer in the nineties.

Of these things Beer and Tobacco stand easily first. By Beer, of course I mean English Beer, a compound of malt and hops, the loss of which is not by any means to be atoned for by any unholy concoction from Germany or Japan ; and by Tobacco I mean that pure weed, chief "captain of dreams," whose fragrance can only be distilled by a pipe—not the in-



sidious cigarette of weak herb and paper, or the Manila cigar, compounded of deception and dirt. From the joys of both these things, of Bass and Pipe, we are weaned suddenly and sternly, by the first breath of Shanghai's summer. The reckless griffin, untouched of liver and rejoicing still in all the beauty of inexperience, may for a while defy the

inevitable ; his eventual collapse is but the swifter for resistance to the common doom. These things October gives us back with no niggard hand, and with them are gradually restored to us many minor joys, such as the blessing of blankets, the

pleasures that lie in horse and gun, exercise free from unseemly perspiration, and the possibility of a post-prandial hour unembittered by mosquitoes. But more than these, because more necessary to the restoration of our moral tone made limp by stress of weather, is the return to the decent and suitable manner of clothing to which civilisation originally called us, to the flowery waistcoats, starched collars, and "fancy tweeds" that differentiate us, outwardly at least, from the savage. The garb to which July reduces us, that lowest common denominator of whites and flannels, brings us to a dead level of commonplace. In the universal striving after some small degree of comfort, dignity and individuality vanish together. Grandon, head of a princely house, becomes even as Grimes the gasfitter, except to the eye of faith. All expression of the separate *ego* is lost in the colourless, collarless, desert of undress, and every man becomes simply a forked radish, as Resartus hath it, enclosed in a shapeless shell of drill. From this evil also does the autumn deliver us.

And with the first cool north-easter the necktie reappears in our midst, peeping out timidly here and there like crocuses in spring, burgeoning on the least exposed spots at first, until it blazons forth on the whole Settlement, a variegated psalm of thanksgiving and relief. A little thing, you will say, this necktie, and yet is it not the crown and finish of our present art of clothes? By what other portion of his raiment can modern man, by taking thought, artfully express his individuality? There is a fitness in boots, I grant you, and a something of expression in the choice of a waistcoat; but in these twilight days of mankind grown melancholy, it is only in the necktie that we can give vent to that instinct of personal decoration which is innate in every man. In its rightful choosing, its appropriate display, lies our solitary opportunity for attracting and holding the female eye, an instinct which abides with us in spite of modern philosophy and the New Woman. That many men lose or spoil this opportunity speaks badly for mankind. And observe what a subtle exponent of a man's very nature is his necktie, how truly it is the outward and visible sign of all his virtues and defects. Let us take a stroll down the Bund together and note the manner and meaning of those we see.

Here, first, is McGrillin, fresh from home, exhaling still something of the black coat and topper atmosphere of a London bank: his ties are from Hodgkinson, monthly, by parcel post, and they totally ignore the warning of Polonius.

"Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express in fancy."

For there is a fine frenzy about these triumphs of haberdashery that shrieks for recognition half a mile away. But then McGrillin is a blade, and he knows what the Household Cavalry were wearing when Bond Street saw him last. I do not know but that such bright splashes and discordances of colour are good in their way under the leaden sky and depressing influences of London town; but here they



do strike a somewhat discordant note. We have enough local colour without them.

Next there is friend Staunton, one of the good old school of British merchants, who came out some time in the sixties to make a rapid fortune and who now remains here to fight—a grim fight against poverty and German competition. The times have left him behind; tea and silk are not what they were, he does not

deal in old rifles, and his fortune consists chiefly of sundry Sheridan and Imuri scrip; but he meets the world with as cheery a face as of old, still "doeshimself well" as he puts it, and remains true to certain old-time standards and gentlemanly traditions that, alas, are rarer than they used to be. Conservative in theory, most liberal in practice, here too the cravat expresses the man: it is a sober tinted "octagon," of the shape fashionable thirty years ago, and savours, like himself, of an honest stock. Those who make fun of Staunton's "octagon" would probably jeer at his principles. Now observe McNab's tie. He told me about it himself with that pride in ingenious thrift which proclaims the Scot. Yamagata, shirtmaker of Dai

Nippon, produces them at a dollar a dozen—good washing crape—but McNab's are made on a plan of his own, all of one width. By this crafty device, as he explains, they may be folded in half in a dozen places and the day of washing thereby deferred; and the fact that their appearance is somewhat clumsy pales before such an advantage.

Here comes Breadwin, enjoying a newly-resurrected pipe. The homely piece of material which enfolds his collar is only one of many family ties—the man bristles with them. In its selection he had no voice, any more than in that of his other raiment; he has enough to do earning money for his quiverfull without watching the details of its outgoing. Breadwin is a philosopher and a cheery one at that; but that limp



neckcloth proclaims two everyday truths, viz., first, that the domesticated male loses some of the finer instincts of his sex, and second, that the man who allows his wife to choose his ties is, aesthetically speaking, lost.

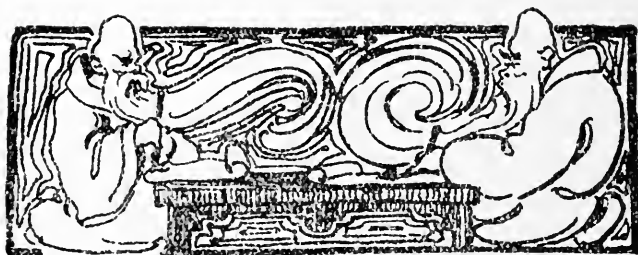
There goes Hardy, the chaazec—Hardy Annual, as his friends call him. From him, as he re-appears each Spring in our midst fresh from Arcadia Blades get the latest wrinkles and learn

to choose wisely—if not well—from promiscuous local importations. A man of fashion is Hardy, and his cravats come from a maker in Conduit Street who supplies the Duke of York. If fashion decreed it correct to wear a bootlace round one's neck, or a bit of Turkey red he would wear it serenely; and all the gilded youths who gaze on him anxiously at the Club would follow suit. Happily, Hardy is above practical joking.

Look at Lovatt there, across the way, the man with the cigarette, whose hair wants cutting. He is a distant result of the 'Yellow Book,' a sort of decadent adapted to tropical climates. Happily we haven't many such—one or two at most—and the number is not increasing. Lovatt, aged 26, is tired

of life, which for him has neither illusions nor interest : in token whereof he sports a large bow, made in the French style, of a pale green shade. Which exactly defines his mental attitude and value.

Bow knots, sailor knots, ready mades and self mades : sober blacks (missionaries mostly) and gaudy bandanas ; silks, satins, cottons, and crapes : there they go, each one of them testifying in some way to the man that wears it. Was there not a wise man who said : " Let me make a nation's ties, and whoever will may make their other garments," or words to that effect ? I seem to remember such a saying.



RETRO-CESSIONAL

[DEDICATED TO RUDYARD KIPLING AT THE TIME OF THE
"PORT ARTHUR INCIDENT"]

Ye Rulers of our land, who hold
In leash our useless battle-line,
Beneath whose hand we now behold
An Empire's sure and swift decline;
Curzon, one thing we ask thee yet:
Let us forget, let us forget!

The pride that was our birthright dies,
Our captains and their ships depart
At word of Czar: official lies
Teach us a new and humble heart;
Salisbury! whilst thou shalt rule us yet,
Let us forget, let us forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away
From risk of French and Russian ire,
And all our pomp of yesterday
Is dead—with men of Dizzy's fire:
Hicks-Beach, thy boasting spare us, yet
Let us forget, let us forget!

If, mad at loss of power, we think
That England once was held in awe,
And curse the "policies" that shrink
From lesser breeds without the Law,
Talk to us softly, Balfour, yet
Let us forget, let us forget!

Let us forget that once our rage
Was stout of heart and strong of word,
Now let us take our menial place,
Dolling the idle, bonstful sword,
Empire on which the sun doth set,
Let us forget, let us forget!

THE INCUMBENT OF PEARL GROTTO

[A TALE OF PEKING]

"*Ho-shang*, lover of all things that have life, love me too," said O'Hara to my friend, the Incumbent. "I will lay all my winnings on the altar if you bring him to me, alive or dead; for the grasshopper is a burden and that infernal noise is eating into my soul."

Chien Shan, the priest, said nothing (he is not talkative when the pangs of a losing game are on him) but he stopped in the middle of a new diagram and fetched a long thin pole from behind the Goddess of Mercy. Then he called to little Wang Erh, who was training his crickets by the gate, to bring him the bird-line—it was in the foreign jam-tin over the store-bed. Jim and I watched his operations with one eye, keeping the other on the beam, whence a sinful cicada was pouring out a torrent of abuse. He had been at it for hours, without turning a hair, defying a rival in the caves of the coolie's quarters, and his voice was rapidly getting on our nerves. After every discharge, he would roll his beady eyes at us and chortle softly to himself of love and war; but Chien Shan made a wily flank movement, touched his wings with the end of the stick and knocked him off into the tub where the lotus-flowers are. O'Hara fished him out and examined his anatomy.

"There's a power of noise to the square inch of this insect now, isn't there? Reminds me of old Rourke at Trinity;—you remember, Phil, the way the little man could use his tongue? And I should say we got just as much good out of him as we get out of this specimen. Still, little Rourke got a living by it, so he's forgiven;—but as for this devil, there's no more excuse for his singing than there is for the people who get up and howl at us when we're trying to digest. I think I can pour out a good deal of active criticism on the present case."

"It occurs to me that some bug-man has shown it to be their method of making love," I remarked for the defence, "and the females are said to enjoy it immensely. If it is a case

of eccentric behaviour under influence of the tender passion, it would be unseemly in you, Jim, to pass judgment."

At this juncture, Wang Erh, acolyte and messenger-in-ordinary, came up to us, with a fierce longing for the cicada in his eye. He could get three cash for it from the barber by the ford, whose brother sells them at the bird-shop just outside the Chang I gate—it would be better than killing it.

"Take him, imp, and begone!" said O'Hara, "but if I hear the voice of a grinder in your quarters, there will be no preliminary trial. Be off with him to the ford now, and ask on the way back whether there are any letters for me at the Legation temple." Wang Erh disappeared with a briskness that the Northerner displays only in his own interests.

"Let's go out into the terrace," I suggested. "We have all had enough of this game for one day and the sun is dropping behind the hill. Buddha means to be hospitable, but his quarters are stuffy and the flavour of these joss-sticks is not sweet. We will sit on the wall and smoke. There is a bit of a breeze and it is jolly to look at the city and think of our dear colleagues sweltering in the heat and dust—a pleasure, by the way, which I shall not enjoy very long."

"Come on, *Ho-shang*," called O'Hara to the priest. The old man had shuffled off to replace the bird-line and was now sitting pensively on the door-step. "Come on! don't play to-morrow's games before to-day has left us. See! I lay on the altar all my winnings, with a dollar as thanks-offering at Amida's feet. Have we not thrown for two hours and have I not won from the old fox who never was beaten before? Surely my glory is enough for me. Bring out the long pipe and sit with us on the wall and tell us of the days when you were young, before barbarians had disturbed the peace of the Middle Kingdom."

So Chien Shan came and sat with us on the wall that fronts the Pearl Grotto, the wall that looks down on the terraced shrines of Ssu Ping Tai and far over the plain, where Peking lay choking in summer dust and evil odours. There we sat, two amateur idlers and one professional, forgetting in the cool of the evening the heat that had been at noon. Below us, Wang Erh, the acolyte, was swinging along with his queue twisted round his head and the expostulations of the cicada

were growing fainter and fainter. Far down in the courtyard of the big temple, where the missionaries pass the summer, we could see through the chestnut and pine trees the ardours of a tennis party, and the breeze brought us fragments of the "Mikado," after the manner of Vernon, the new Legation student. It was towards the end of July, and in every temple of the Western Hills the dignified little game of European diplomacy was being played, in places sacred to the dreamy cult of Buddha, with mutual gain and much friendliness. Across the broad plain, round which the Peiho flows, and beyond the old pagoda, the west gate of the city stood out in clouds of dust from a misty green background: ugly, distinct, and speaking to two of us on the wall of things unutterable—of things which he who rides by may see, as one sees the weeds on a pond whose depths are hidden. Chien Shan too could see the city walls, and to him they brought recollections of many things that we can never know, even though we live among them and try to learn them.

O'Hara sighed contentedly as he offered the Incumbent a Manila. Then he turned to me. "How long did you say you were out for?"

"Ten days," I replied, "and precious hard to get them, even with the medico to lie for me. That's the beauty of working for these natives: the hotter it gets, the livelier they become;—*ergo*, the livelier they make it for us."

"Well, old man, I'm sorry for you. I haven't been near the city for two months, but I can imagine it. Don't forget there's always room for you here on Saturdays; it may possibly give you an object in life—though why you ever took service with the heathen is a mystery to me."

"Dollars," I said, "simply dollars, and a desire to see things that are'n't in the science primers."

James O'Hara, being one of H. B. M.'s experiments, could afford to be critical. The average public servant in the remote East does not usually die of a surfeit of prosperity, but to be the *corpus vile* of a civil service experiment means acting pay without end and letters after one's name. Jim always had a way of landing on his feet, even in the old Botany Bay days. For the time being he was helping certain Southern authorities to show breadth of mind and a large contempt for ordinary

"SO WHEN SHAN CAME AND SAT WITH US ON THE WALL."

W.B.S.





utility, and he achieved this by a leisurely absorption of Mandarin dialect. (Happily for the official business of a Crown Colony he has since been able to forget it). Besides this, and on his own account, he was "cultivating friendly relations with the natives," which is a thing that very few of us know or care how to do. He took to the Chinese from the first day he came among them, just as some grillins take to horses and others to tennis and gossip with the women. He was in sympathy with them instinctively, with them and their old pagan ways, their *t'eng-shui* and traditions, grasping without effort the lines of thought, the daily mysterious nothings that make every Chinaman the enigma he is. And that, by the way, is the reason why he never pretends to have fathomed the simplest child among them.

The Incumbent had been smoking placidly while we talked, and now he put out the cigar, rubbing it softly on the stone. Then he wrapped up what was left of it in his sleeve cloth and smiled at O'Hara. His usual admiration for my friend had not been diminished by the recent donation to the shrine.

"Ha lao-yeh," he said (which was his way of addressing Jim) "I am old now, and in my time I have seen many kinds of men among my own people. But I am glad that in my last days you two have been my friends, you whose words I love to remember in winter when I am alone. It is good to know things which one does not hear spoken of in the tea-house."

"It has been a fair exchange," said Jim; "you have taught us more than the teachers."

The old man went on, speaking slowly as he does when he has been thinking.

"Within the four seas all are brethren; it is a good saying. But most of those who come to us from without the eighteen provinces say it emptily; even though they know the Four Books by heart, they speak to us as strangers who stay but for a little time. But with you, my friends, it is not so. Were I not an old man, I should travel to see your great country, that Ireland which you say is tributary to the English. Tell me, why is that so? Here, with us, the Englishman is always beneath the Irish; it is so in Chilibi, it is so in Kwangtung, it is so, men say, in America. This is a hard matter to understand."

"It is because all the good men left when we came away" explained O'Hara. "But, friend, no politics. Government, in our country, would smell as sweet by any other name. Look, *Ho-shang*, there is another hour before vespers; tell us of the time when our soldiers were camped in the Anting plain."

"No, Jim," said I, "it is my call for a story. To-day I want to hear, *Ho-shang*, how you came to shave your head. You were'nt exactly a priest in some of the stories you have told us. Tell us how you got religion."

"It was the will of Heaven," said the old man. "I will tell you the story, such as it is, but you will not tell it again; for I am a Tientsin man and the others (even Yü, the head priest who collects the rents) know nothing of me except that my uncle is chief of the Lamas in the Yellow Temple. It is better so."

"It is twenty years since I shaved my head and became a servant of Buddha, and I did it because I wanted peace; I longed for a quiet place where I might rest and where men speak but little. That is a long while ago and my heart has forgotten to feel sorrow, but I am glad I came here; I have seen enough life. In the old days I ate flesh and knew that the five vegetables were forbidden; now I know that I live without taking life and that every day I say the same prayers that other men are saying from Behar to Siam. But these are but customs, even such as you Christians make also; they do not change a man's heart. I will tell you what changed mine."

"You have often heard how it happened that I came with my wife to live in Peking. It was just after the great war, and I had been married two years. Those were the days when the first Legations were being built and furnished, and my father was wise when he opened the carrier's business between Tientsin and the Hata gate; it was a good trade and we prospered. My father lived at Tientsin, just beyond the bridge of boats, and I looked after the business there in the city; the beasts were well cared for at both places and there were no middle-men to eat our profits. You must have seen my shop; it is just inside the gate where the camels rest. I have heard that Ma, the Mahomedan tobacco-dealer, has it now."

"I lived there for eight years, thinking at first only whether the roads were good or bad, and losing in my work

the restlessness that had grown from my wanderings. But to all who have to expiate the sins of a former life there comes trouble, sooner or later, and mine came to me in its own time—not suddenly, but gradually as a man's load grows heavier when rain is falling.

"You know, *ta-jên*, how it is with us. The water-carrier who has a son is happier than the great man who has none. Ancestors and posterity, the desire for these is in our blood before we are born—it has grown in us for ten thousand years, and we cannot change it."

"We too worship our ancestors," I said "if they died rich and left their portraits painted on canvas. Not otherwise."

"I know," said the old man, "that in these matters your ways are not as our ways. But you understand me. Well, it was after my third child was born and I saw that it was a girl like the first two, that the weight began to grow heavy on my heart. I would rise in the morning and hear the camels chewing the cud in the yard, and be glad; and then I would remember that I had no son and all the joy of life would go from me. This was when I had been married six years, and every day the thought was with me that there would be no one to support my old age—no one to keep the spirits from my grave or to burn incense before the tablets. And my wife too, who knew my thoughts, ate her food in bitterness. She was a good woman, the daughter of my father's friend, and there were never words between us; there was no need for them, for she was a thrifty wife and knew the beauty of silence. After our third daughter was born she came to me and said that I should take a second wife—and by that you may know what manner of woman she was. But I would not. If Heaven would give me a son, I said, there was yet time; but I would never sow the seeds of trouble in my own house. A man may pay too dearly for the cloak that hides him from destiny."

"In those days, as I have told you, I was of the Confucianists. Nevertheless, as my wife begged me, I left the business for two months with a friend, and we made a pilgrimage to the Lama Miao, many days journey beyond the Great Wall. She sat in the cart when the roads were good, and I walked by her side; and every day she prayed for a son

and we gave alms to the temples by the way. We had a letter and presents to the Chief Lama from my uncle, and my wife had worked an embroidered cloth for the altar of Kuanyin. In the fifth month we returned to the city, and in the following spring my son was born and I could look on my neighbours' children without bitterness.

"But there! I do not like to think too much of the year that my son was in my house. I will finish the story and go to my prayers.

"We had a *mu-ts'ai* under our roof, a girl that my father had bought at the time of the great flood, when she was but four years old. He had given her to me when we came to Peking and she had been a good servant to us, but at times very passionate and strange in her speech. When my son was born she was about eighteen years of age, and that spring the small-pox had marked her and left her more uncertain of temper than before. My wife wanted to get the sorcerers in to exorcise her evil spirit, but I would not have them; and I said to the girl that she must get rid of her devil at her own expense—for I did not believe in it then.

"It happened that on the third day before the festival of the eighth moon I had to go to Mat'ou, on the river, to replace a mule that had broken down in one of the carts. I started at dawn, as soon as the gate was opened, after bidding my wife see to the incoming carriers and take good care of the boy. As I went out, he lay on the *k'ang*, laughing, and his mother was dressing him. And all that day, when I thought of them and my house and my prosperity, I sang as I rode. I sang and I finished my business speedily, and the next day I turned homewards with a light heart. I met no omen by the way, nothing to tell me that my house was desolate and that sorrow had overtaken me.

"As I rode into the courtyard at evening there was a crowd before my door and the headman of our quarter was standing on the steps. When they saw me they were silent and looked at me strangely, so that great fear came upon me and I dared not ask any questions. Then they made way for me, whispering to each other, and I went into my house. On the *k'ang*, where I had seen her last, my wife lay—dead, though her blood was still warm in her veins. My daughters, the

three little useless ones, were in the house and some women were petting them, but my son was not there. Then, as one in a dream, I asked the women how my wife had died; and they told me how that she had taken opium at noon and killed herself. And by this I knew that my son must be dead also.

"Of what happened that day I remember nothing more; the neighbours took the three girls away and left me in my empty house, with one of my carters to take care of me. A friend came in and told me that my son was dead and I knew it was true and said nothing. I did not even ask what they had done with the body. Then came the mourners and the funeral; my younger brother came from Tientsin and saw to all that was necessary. After that I left my daughters and the business with him and went for a time to stay with my father. I did not know why I went, but I was dazed with sorrow and could not stay in the empty house.

"Afterwards, when I began to think again, they told me of the manner of my son's death. It happened on the evening of the day on which I left home that Hung, the servant-girl of whom I have told you, broke a porcelain bowl of value and my wife called her into the front room to reprove her for her carelessness. There was a neighbour present at the time and the *mu ts'ui*, angry at losing face before a stranger, answered her mistress with quick words. To punish this insolence my wife had her locked in a small outhouse for the night and the evening rice was kept from her. She lay there till morning and the watchman said that she slept—if so, it was because she had planned her revenge quickly.

"In the morning my wife, rising before daybreak, opened the door and bade the girl go about her work; and the slave kotow'd with a humble face and a devil in her heart. My wife saw that the boy was asleep; so, telling the *mu ts'ui* to dress the other little ones she went into the kitchen to prepare food—and while she was boiling rice, the Black Cart passed my door and bore away my son.

"You know the Black Cart; you have waited for the gates to open before sunrise and seen it, waiting there also to carry out its load and bury it beyond the walls. The driver never looks at a child; he finds it on the doorstep, between the

night and the dawn, and puts it with the others—not asking its age, nor whether it be alive or dead. To us who sit here among the trees it is horrible even to think of these things, but you know that they are true. And the people say truly that Peking has no river, as Hankow and Canton have, and the useless ones cannot be fed.

"The cart of the southern district finishes its round at the Hata Gate, arriving there as the sun touches the top of the tower, and the houses by the gate are the last where it looks for the little ones. Hung, the *mu-ts'ai*, knew this. While my wife was busy with the food she watched for the cart, and when she heard the driver calling to his mule in the alley beyond the cross roads, she took my son, the prop of my house, and laid him on the doorstep. And the driver took him up and carried him with the others to the pit beyond the city walls. The girl, having seen the cart pass through the gateway, crossed the street and talked with a servant who was sweeping the courtyard of the 'Golden Pomegranate.' And in a little while she heard my wife calling her from the door of the house, asking her what she had done with the boy. The slave ran to her mistress and lied with lies that were half the truth: the child had awakened, she said, so that she had taken him in her arms and soothed him to sleep; and as she walked with him in the courtyard, her friend at the ten-house had called to her; so, thinking no harm, she had put the boy on the threshold within the door-way—he could not be gone from there, unless a neighbour had taken him away in jest.

"And Heaven ordained that the thought of the Black Cart did not come to my wife until it was too late. She was a good woman, and such evil came not easily to her heart. So while my son was being carried forth with the outcasts she went to her neighbours, more wrathful than afraid, and asked for the child. At last, when one of the women spoke jestingly of the 'Dark Harvester,' my wife remembered the evil spirit of the girl Hung and the truth came upon her as a hawk falleth upon the reed-birds. Then she ran swiftly and hired the best of the carts that stood at the cross roads, and bade the man drive furiously, promising him twenty ounces of silver for her son's life. But, *ta-jên*, it was no use; there was a crush

of camels at the gates and the road was blocked with much traffic; therefore, when they came to the place where the nameless ones are laid, the cart was empty and the diggers had covered the pit. Seeing the woman's sorrow they opened it again, and gave her the body of him who had laughed only two hours before; and my wife took the little one and returned home, speaking softly and singing to him. There were friends in the courtyard when she reached our house who asked about the boy and told her that Hsing, the *mu-ts'ui* had fled. My wife showed them the child on her bosom and said that all was well. Then she went with it into the inner room to be alone; and there she swallowed the drug. At noon, when they found her, she was still alive, but two hours later she died."

"That is the story, my friends. That is why I shaved my head and came to live in the stillness of the temple where great sorrows cannot come. It is a long time ago, and now, as I sit here and look towards the city, I can bear to think of those days. I have not seen for twenty years the house near the gate, the house that once held my wife and my son."

The boom of the great bell at Hsiang Chieh Ssü startled the stillness of the hill, calling the faithful to prayers and diplomacy to dinner. Chien Shan ceased speaking and for a while we gazed in silence at the distant roofs of the Forbidden City, flaming a bright yellow in the last of the sunset. Then the old man climbed down from the wall and disappeared into the darkness where he keeps his store of joss-sticks. We two sat on, while behind us, Sun, the one-eyed, was laying the table.

"It is a strange people," said O'Hara, as the first words of the incumbent's prayer broke suddenly on our silence. But then, for the matter of that, so are we. I suppose we are mostly as God made us—not much better as a rule."

Jim has his own way of treating the classics.



DINES TO A MINCE-PIE

[ALAS POOR SHELLEY]

I arise from dreams of thee
 In the first sad sleep of night.
 Oh, the winds are breathing low
 And I'm feeling far from right.
 I arise from dreams of thee,
 And a feeling of unrest
 Has led me—who knows how?
 To the family medicine chest.

The gas shines dim and faint
 Where the rows of bottles gleam.
 And I smell a sickly smell
 That is like to a chemist's dream:
 Sad memories of mince
 Lie heavy on my heart
 Oh why, why *did* I dine
 On that unwholesome tart?

Oh put me in my bed,
 I die, I faint, I fail!
 And bathe with sweet cologne
 My lips and eyelids pale.
 My cheek is cold and white, alas,
 My heart beats loud and fast:
 Now hear me swear it once again,
 That pie shall be my last!

A MIDSUMMER DAY'S DREAM

It was the good ship "Empress," and she was steaming lazily through the Inland Sea with her nose towards Shanghai. Tiffin had come and gone—crayfish, curry, cream-puffs and cheese were my choice, as they seemed good sea-diet—and most of our one hundred and fifty passengers were allowing digestion to do its best. I, for one, had found a long chair and had taken the "Hunting of the Snark" from the ship's library. There was something in the air that suggested Carroll's poem as appropriate reading for the occasion: our big ship, so curiously laden, making her way through the shimmering islands of this summer sea; the motley collection of humanity, prostrated with tiffin, around me, and over yonder the old-world shrines and quiet homes of Japanese fisher-folk. Here, all the maddest *fin-de-siècle* results of our modernity, and there, not half-a-mile away, sleepy villages, dreaming undisturbed their quaint old-fashioned dreams.

It was very peaceful and very pleasant. Gradually, as I watched the square-sailed trawlers making for their little harbours, I felt that this must be the real world to which I rightly belonged, and that the "Empress" and her crew were but the shadow of a dream that would pass and leave me in peace; a phantom ship, pursuing some phantom snark, of whose company I was unwittingly a member. I would leave it soon, land on the first island, and let them pursue their snarks without me. They were mad.

Just as I had come to this decision, the voice of the Bellman sounded, raucous as ever, in my ears, and he jingled his bell—five times, I think. The Beaver, who till then had been reading an American paper, dropped it at once, and commenced work on an old piece of lace which she took from a

bag. Beside her, on one chair (it was a long one) sat a pair of lovers, and fragments of their whispered talk reached us at intervals—it was not so much about the snark, as of a bride-cake, breakfast for seventy and a house on the Bubbling Well Road. The Beaver sighed.

"Where," she enquired, "is the Butcher?" Now the Butcher was playing cricket further up the deck with the Broker, the Banker and several of the crew. We could hear him shouting to the Banker (whose name was David), and, the Broker was quoting them the day's rates between each ball, evidently for practice. I told her that he was busy, which greatly re-assured her, and she went on with her work.

"It's very annoying," she remarked after a pause, "but, you know, I have broken my air-cushion. One can't make lace properly without one. I went to the skipper, at once, and asked him if they kept them on board, and what do you think he said?"

I gave it up, of course. Nobody could guess what a skipper will say. They are always at sea.

"Air-cushions, madam, air-cushions? Of course we keep them—nothing else on board. What's more, they're the best 'orse 'air—that's what he said." And again the Beaver sighed.

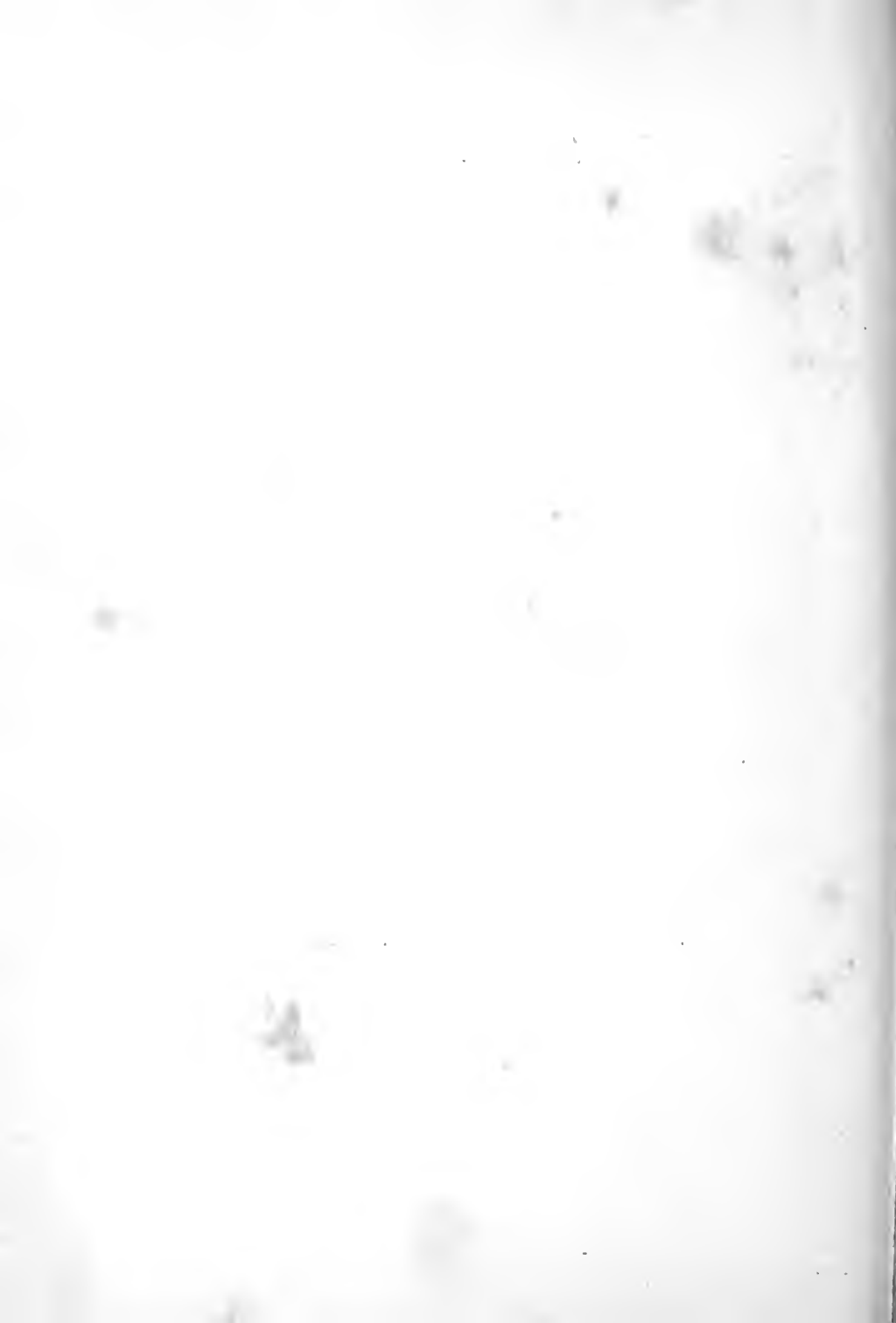
Just then the American Syndicate man came by, with his telescope under one arm and a Corean Minister under the other. The Minister was picking his teeth with a hairpin and looked puzzled. The Syndicate man had been telling him a conundrum—something about tiffin and the waist of the ship—and His Excellency had asked him to put it into French. I rose and walked with them. The road was a poor one and badly rolled, and I said so.

"I shall speak to the Council about it," said the Colonel. "How dare they use the best granite for drain pipes?" He took an orange from his pocket and handed it to the Corean. "It keeps him quiet," he remarked confidentially, "and I haven't got a railway-share left. He's taken them all. But I'm going to get a new lot in Peking. We've settled everything except the sleepers. May I put your name down for a dozen?"

He did not wait for my answer, but began writing at once in his notebook, humming softly to himself:—



THE ROAD WAS A POOR ONE AND BADLY ROLLED."



"You may threaten its life with a railway-share.

You may charm it with smiles and soap."

"Soft soap," he added, as an afterthought. "soft soap and a smile every hour. Have one?"

We were looking down on the steerage. There were dozens of passengers playing dominoes with the crew, and the Canadian Missionary was playing a cornet, while the chief stoker sang. We could hear all the music and some of the words, which were :

"It is this, it is this that oppresses my soul

When I think of my uncle's last words :

And my heart is like nothing so much as a bowl

Brimming over with quivering curds."

"That," said the Secretary of Legation, "is the fault of the Bellman. Cornets should be charged double fare; also Ministers. You," he went on to the Corean (whose face was covered with orange), "are a Minister, aren't you?"

"Yes," he said, sadly, "Chosen Minister. Half fare."

The *Times* correspondent entered the pun in his diary for future use, while the Lady whose children were all under twelve turned pale and made for the Companion. The Companion was mending socks and offered no suggestions; so the Lady retired to the lee-scutters and called for beef-tea.

Again the Bellman rushed past and rang his Bell—six times—fiercely. The Purser, who had been playing on a Mandolin to the Teaman's daughter, dropped it, shouting: "Man the boats, woman the boats, all babies for the shore!" and four Gilded Youths at the bar took up the chorus.

It was the Broker who first saw the shark. It was coming, he said, at a splendid rate. I saw the brute, but too late, for it fastened on my chest, and sat there heavily. It was evidently one of the feathered kind that bite, unless—horrible thought—it was a Boojum. The very idea of such a thing made me struggle violently.

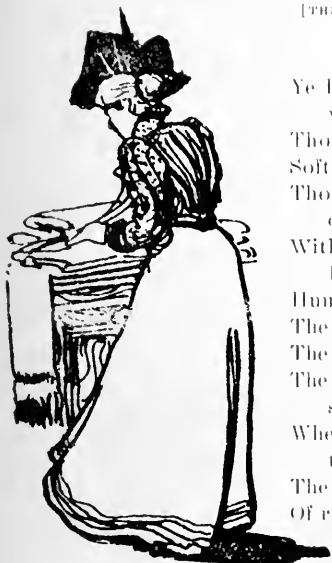
"If you will eat curry and crayfish," said the Secretary of Legation, "you can't expect to sleep well after it. Come along and make up a rubber. It doesn't look well to see a stout man on a cane-chair kicking at nothing."

I told him I didn't want to sleep if there were snarks about, and we went to our rubber. But, as we played, the voice of the Broker came to us on the breeze, urging the Banker to run, and quaint little islands, mysterious and silent, passed by, one by one. The Colonel and the Corean were still talking close at hand, and the missionary's cornet sounded fitfully in the fo'castle: and the Lawyer said I was playing abominably. No wonder.



TO OLD AGE

[THE POET'S THOUGHT ON LEARNING THAT HIS WILL
HAS GONE TO A CLEARANCE SALE.]



Ye happy dreams that I have dreamt, fare-
well!

Thou trellised cottage by the river's brim,
Soft sheltered in some chestnut-shaded dell,
Thou and thy pleasant places have grown
dim

With this fell stroke. Farewell! henceforth
I bow

Humbly my head beneath the hand of Fate,
The modest acres and their gentle cow,
The little paddock with its painted gate,
The hedge where rabbits burrow, and the
stream

Where I, in fancy, lured bright-speckled
trout,

The fragrant orchard with its golden gleam
Of ripening apples— all are blotted out!

Now mine henceforth a vision of old age,
Penurious, unprofitable, drear;
Sadly I scan the dark prophetic page
Of my declining days, and yonder, clear,
Stands the white almshouse that awaiteth me,
I see myself beside its ugly door,
Smoking the pipe of niggard charity,
I see my place amidst a dozen more
Decepit waifs that eat the parish fare
And wash it down with pints of parish ale
Bright hopes, farewell! nought's left but grim despair—
Amelia's at a Ladies' Clearance Sale.

A HOME-MADE MADRIGAL

The poet, as everybody knows, is born, not made. I had the good fortune to be born, personally. But even the poet born shares with ordinary humanity the vulgar liability to bad days, days on which his divine afflatus is ejected by the world, the flesh and the devil. At times, be it said, the hushing of his melodious muse is due to the work of his own hand, acting directly upon the unfathomable depths of digestion; at others he sits blamelessly silent, his soul ravaged and torn by the stress of domestic and social conditions which lie beyond his control. But the "stream of song that flows from Helicon" is oftener dammed by the thoughtless attitude of the poet's family towards his muse than by his own weaknesses; unless, indeed, we include amongst those weaknesses, the fact of his having a family at all.

I have had cause, during the last week, to realise these things more keenly than ever, for, on Monday, there entered into my system one of those pestilent microbes whose visits result in a cold in the head. I know of nothing so injurious to my soulful temperament as this, so utterly fatal to my natural sweetness and light. I defy any poet with a head that feels like suet-pudding and the respiration of a grampus, to sit down, armed with handkerchiefs and eucalyptus oil, and write as he should about stars and sky-larks and pretty spring-time maids. Of course, some poor devils, like Alfred Austin and myself, have got to work to order, whether our hearts are full of joy or woe, at the bidding of unpoetic employers: this is our misfortune, and the public suffers with us. (Austin, poor fellow, has a chronic catarrh, which makes his case the sadder.)

I nursed my cold all Monday, inhaling many kinds of noxious vapours under my wife's directions. They made me feel extremely sick but appeared to agree with the cold-microbes who flourished exceedingly and became more active. Towards evening I sent for a doctor. My wife said it was only waste of time and money, for everybody knew that no

doctor could cure a cold in the head. We argued a little on the subject (I never argue with Celia when I am well), and I said that if modern science couldn't deal with a simple thing like this it had better be given every opportunity to learn: there was always a chance that the study of my case might reveal the secret which had only defied the profession for six thousand years or so. Anyway, it didn't seem to me any use for doctors to go on to meningitis or the bubonic plague, or any other modern disease until they had settled this old outstanding business; so I would put up five taels on the off-chance and in the interests of humanity.

Well, Celia was quite right about the doctor and enjoyed that keen satisfaction which lies in being able to say: "I told you so." After informing me that I had caught a severe cold—a fact of which I was already aware—my learned friend was good enough to admit that the science of medicine was not in a position to assist me in the matter; and he was pleased to endorse my wife's method of treatment. So I went to bed, grumpy enough, with a hot bottle at my feet and a plaster on my chest.

Next morning I got a chit from a person who thinks he edits a literary paper (to which I contribute for my crimes and for bread), saying that he must have a madrigal within twenty-four hours; something sentimental (*i.e.* twaddle) to please his lady readers.

Now, under ordinary circumstances, it is a matter of indifference to me (so long as I am sufficiently paid) whether I write a lullaby, a sonnet, or a funeral dirge. But to be asked to compose an idiotic madrigal about tomfits and a lady's eyebrows when one's whole system is full of cold-microbes is not the sort of thing to make one enamoured of the modern profession of letters. A madrigal, with cantarrh accompaniment, is not my ideal of congenial work.

I expressed myself to this effect at breakfast, but Celia was not so sympathetic as I should have liked: her remarks, in fact, bore upon the futility of quarrelling with one's bread and butter and the precarious existence of a poet's family at the best of times. I allowed the subject to drop, for I saw clearly in its further discussion an unlimited prospect of those sordid details which harass the poet's soul. So I retired to

my den, got out my rhyming dictionary, and, lighting a pipe, began the making of the madrigal.

Let me remark that, as a general rule, those songs of mine in which the public justly delights are composed in the reading-room at the Club. (It is a comfortable spot and usually deserted). I do not think I had ever before been obliged to write any urgently-required copy in the bosom of my own family: it would certainly never have occurred to me to attempt it of my own free will. And now that I was face to face with the stern necessity, the horror of the situation became more apparent every minute.

The rain was pelting against my window and there was a howling draught in the room: I think, therefore, that the lines with which the madrigal began reflect some credit upon my imaginative faculty:—

“Softly, my love, the whispering breath of May
Sings to the opening flower.
Dew-diamonds glisten on the hawthorn spray”

At this point, and just as my rheumatic muse was getting into her stride, the coolie came in with a dustpan and other implements, to “tidy up.” At the first bang of his shovel on the grate the poor muse shuddered, and by the time he had arranged the fire to his liking she had collapsed altogether. He was leisurely proceeding, with an arrangement in feathers, to re-arrange all the dust in the room, when I rose and, more in sorrow than in anger, kicked him downstairs. A few minutes afterwards Celia came up and said, amongst other things, that she couldn’t manage the house if I ill-treated the servants in this way, and that the coolie had gone to bed. I was doing my best to convince her that the composition of a madrigal requires an atmosphere of peace and quiet when the arrival of the washerman created a diversion. She proceeded in the company of that destroyer of linen to “count the wash” in the passage just outside my door, whilst I sat mournfully within, mute, inglorious, and cursing editors as a class. In due time, when the washerman had departed and silence, “like a poultice,” soothed my soul, I seized my pen once more and invoked the injured muse.

"I DIDN'T COME HERE TO DISSESS HAWTHORN SPRAYS."





Before she had time to answer, I heard on the stairs a sound I have cause to know only too well, a sound laden with every portent of evil: 'twas the voice of the cook. With it, but fainter, was the voice of Celia, and, alas, both were rapidly approaching. I knew what was coming, but flight was impossible; so I sat still, groaning in the spirit. They came in. Celia had the market account in one hand and an inferior-looking cauliflower in the other. I was in for it, and so was the cook; but I, for one, did not propose to succumb without a struggle.

"Dearest," said I, "this thing is worrying me; I've only got three lines written and there are twenty-one more. I will read you these three and you may be able to help me with a fourth." (I read them, while Celia stamped her foot.)

"Dew-diamonds glisten on the hawthorn spray. That's rather a good line, Celia! But I can't get on with it."

"I didn't come here to discuss hawthorn sprays," said my wife: "I want you to look at this cauliflower and say if it is worth twenty cents? If you let the cook go on squeezing us like this we shall end in the poorhouse, and you won't bother much about hawthorn sprays then, I imagine."

After ten minutes of most unpleasant discussion, I pacified Celia by cutting the cook half-a-dollar. I do this, to oblige her, very frequently, but as the fines are invariably overlooked in the cook's monthly settlement, he doesn't mind. So Celia, the cook and the cauliflower went their respective ways.

I may as well come to the point by admitting that the madrigal was never written. After the cauliflower's exit there came a brief lull in our tempest of domestic cares, but it was only the precursor of worse outbreaks. The piano-tuner came at eleven, and for half-an-hour inflicted his most ingenious form of torture upon my shattered nerves. While he was still at it Celia came in, and finding me sitting with my head in my hands, was glad that I had got through my work so soon (ha-ha!) as I could help her to measure some cloth for which the tailor was waiting. I measured that cloth, in silence. Then there came an unwashed native whose glad mission it was to repair bells, and for several hours it was as if a thousand devils were being married on the premises. There was a breezy interval for tiffin, followed by the sympathetic

intrusion of a well-meaning person whom I had no desire to entertain. At 6 p.m. I wrote to the editor that I was in a high fever and that he needn't wait for any madrigals.

He filled up that page with an article which had been successfully kept out of his six last numbers, and the criticisms which followed were placed to my credit. I don't mind that. What I object to is Celia's astonishment at the result of my day's work.





ON THE MERRY MALOO

[A PARODY]

A wet street and a going gee,
A dog cart travelling fast,
The moke is going recklessly,
Each stride may be his last ;
Each stride may be his last, my boys—
What was that squeal and thud ?
Away the pony flies, and leaves
A beldame in the mud.

Oh, for a Bobby, brave and strong!
I heard a fair one cry,
To clear the traffic-laden road
Of rickshas sauntering by ;
Of rickshas sauntering by, my boys,
And sailors tight and free,
And barrow-coolies, all as deaf
And blind as they can be.

There's danger in yon hawker's stall
And trouble in yon crowd,
The mafoo, clinging to his seat
Is shouting very loud ;
He's shouting very loud, my boys,
The moke is going free,
'Tis odds but that the Cripples' Home
Our heritage will be.

ARMS AND THE MAN

"For East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," says Kipling in the finest of modern ballades. Li Wing and I have just been getting an insight into the truth of this saying from its opposite sides.

Li Wing is a Cantonese tea broker and a friend of mine. He was an old friend years ago—in the days when China tea meant business, and before the tarry compound of India had destroyed English palates and digestions. I remember him as a hopeful young larn-pidgin in the old Yuen-fong tea room, way back in the seventies—and mighty smart he was even then at catching on to everything he saw or heard. But we've both learned a good deal since those days: most of it by the sad process of experience.

But there—I don't want to think of those tea seasons or of old times. They're gone now and we'll never see them again. Those hurrying days when the alleyway into the city from the Bund was blocked with coolies, and the steamers—British steamers—full at £3 a ton, lay crowded in the stream. Now, well, most of us have dropped tea, and dollars too for that matter: all the buying up there is done now by the Russians, except a chop or two of second-class stuff on commission. The old race of chazees is dead, and the hustling life of a Hankow tea season is dead too. No gay crowd comes down that evil-smelling alley from Yuen-fong's clubwards after dinner; the poor beggars sleeping along its walls lie undisturbed. The old Brigade is scattered. Well, so be it—*tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse*! I suppose one ought to be thankful that there's any livelihood at all to be made out here; for there won't be much longer.

But to come back to Li Wing. His friendship with me is an old habit, of the sneaking undemonstrative kind that suits us both; and whenever he wants to know anything he drops in for a chat in my den, in the old tea office full of empty muster tins and memories. He has been in frequently since the

war discussing events and has become violently radical in a mild way; so that to-day, when I saw him walk in with that calm air of *insouciance* and subdued jauntness that distinguishes your Cantonese, I thought he had come to ask when Russia was going to chip in. But he hadn't.

Sitting down by my desk, he removed his goggles and looked leisurely around. Trade is slack and we can afford to be leisurely. His eye wandered observantly about the room, while we passed the usual salutations, and rested at last on a pair of shoes left yesterday, by Tung Hop, for my wife. A curious expression flitted across his face, half sad, half amused; but he said nothing.

"No," said I, "not yet, Ah Wing. Half a dozen Vermouth or a length of shirtings—but we don't do boots yet."
"Boots no use," he said, taking me seriously as usual, "straw hats better. Straw hats or cigarettes, large chance."

Meanwhile he had been searching in the innermost recesses of his peach-coloured silk sleeves, and produced at last a foreign envelope which he handed to me in silence. It was addressed to himself and empty. There was nothing peculiar about it that I could see, beyond a red crest, rather larger than usual, which displayed an impossible animal armed with battle axe, *passant*, and the legend *per ardua ad altiora*. I handed it back again.

"Well, what's the matter with that?"

"That Mr. Robinson send me yesterday, you see. Mr. Robinson, Nan-sing teaman, you know go home last year get married. Before, he chits never have got this chop; just now entchee, how fashion? I have see plenty foreigner writing paper use this kind thing before and never understand it, you see. So I come to you, ask you please explain." Li's English is a little above pidgin when he talks slowly, but it lapses when he has much to say or is too interested to weigh his words.

Whew! Robinson's fabulous monster had awakened a thirst for knowledge difficult to satisfy. It was a big order. There sat Li, representing in body and mind untold centuries of Orientalism, asking me the meaning and object of Western heraldry; as well try and teach a cat to bark. Nevertheless, I knew from experience that if I said it would be unintelligible to

him, he would infer that I did not understand it myself. So I began by giving him the origin of crests. King Arthur's knights—in modified English; the chivalry of the Middle Ages, and our long wars with France. From that I wandered, unaccompanied by Li, to the College of Heralds and order of Poursuivants. And, finally, I tried to explain how it is that in these modern times, although hand-to-hand combats are out of date, armour useless and promiscuous manslaughter unfashionable, the peaceful modern merchant-man likes to keep on his note paper and spoons the coat-of-arms of some real or imaginary cut-throat of by-gone days.

Then, taking Robinson's armorial bearings as my text, I explained to him how, probably, in the stirring days of the crusades one *Sieur de Robin* had slain with his battle-axe a Saracen on whose plumed crest was the fierce animal aforesaid; how, probably, *de Robin* had been knighted on the tented field for his prowess and had borne his victim's trophy on his shield henceforward; and how all the Robinsons had used it peacefully ever since.

This last idea of spoiling the dead seemed to please Ah Wing. (I think it was the only one he understood). But his look was perplexed and full of questions.

"Just now what side Crusade?" he asked. "Suppose any foreign man want clest, must go Crusade?"

I explained that the last crests obtained in this way were several hundred years old, and that those who now use them glory in their possession as proving ancient lineage.

"Suppose Englishman fight Japan man, no get clest?"

Li was surprised to hear that he did not—that his usual reward in modern warfare is a silver coin to wear on his coat and a sure prospect of the almshouse in old age. But at last the idea of the ancience of heraldry began to dawn on him.

"Ah, I see," he said, "no belong chop; allo same pay face-pidgin. Any man have got clest, he family long time before do large mandarin? Not common man. All very old family, eh?"

Li was going too fast, and I had to stop him. "No, not all old families," I said, "nor all old crests," and I pointed out that many modern coats of arms had been recognised by the College of Heralds by virtue of beer well brewed, successful

"SHELL JOE SPOKE THE WHOLE TRUTH TO NAUGHTY JOE."





usury, or money well placed in high quarters. Lastly, and not without misgivings, I confessed that over and above the family escutcheons recognised by Fairbairn and Debrett there were, alas, in circulation many bogus and ridiculous inventions: mushroom growths, innocent of Royal letters patent or of charter, the result of unholy social striving pandered to by the evil arts of heraldic stationers.

"Made in Germany," suggested Li at a venture.

"Worse," said I, "made in sin and invented in ignorance."

"But," he asked, and his brow was creased by the expense of thought, "how long time must use elest before he belong all proper?"

"It is never genuine," I replied, "unless recorded by the College of Heralds."

"You know what elest true, what piece no true?"

"Heaven forbid! These things concern none but the user, and the public leaves every man to his own conscience in the matter. Women have none."

"Then suppose anyone no savey, new elest all same old one. Imitation trade-mark allo same true?" "Practically," I admitted; "but, as I said just now, there's always a man's conscience—and the College of Heralds."

Li didn't understand either term; and his expression said so. But I couldn't explain them. We had reached bed-rock, the indefinable.

"Look here, Li Wing," said I, "don't you worry about crests. They are only a relic of barbarism and about as much use as old postage stamps. Those who own the oldest and proudest are generally half-witted or quite depraved, and the humblest new ones belong to brave women and rich men; wise nations, like France and America, don't recognise them—at least not in theory. It's all play-pidgin, my friend, just toys for people to play with who can't find amusement in other ways. But if you like one, I'll get you one at Bi Fah's."

"No, thank you, I don't want it, you see," he said, "our hong have got very good chop." But the perplexity on his face had deepened. He was beginning to realise that there were things in his neighbourhood of which his philosophy had not dreamed.

He rose slowly to go, pondering. Then "have you got cleft?" he inquired, irrelevantly enough.

I admitted the impeachment, with a flush of justifiable pride in the noble escutcheon of the Porsons, and of the many honoured bearers of that name who lived and died before it dealt in tea.

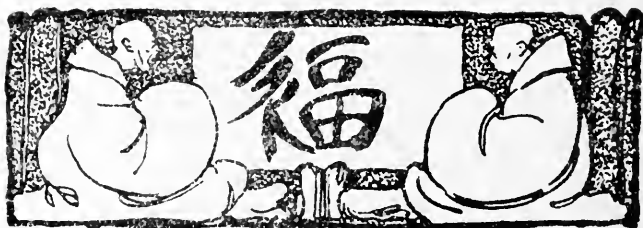
"Please show to me."

I produced an old *ex libris* from my desk, showing the full coat of arms, supporters and all. The three boars, proper, gules on field argent; bend or and chevrons over the legend "*Pauci Verba*,"—would they convey any voice from a glorious past to Li Wing? Would he see them as I did, borne on vizored crest and burnished shield through foray and press of mailed knights?

He was looking at it still, the supporters (Moors) evidently puzzling him. At last he handed it to me again.

"You family have sell pig before, or belong that black man do pig-pidgin for you?"

That was all he had gathered from an hour's discourse on the arms and heraldry of Europe. Kipling is right.





A BALLADE OF SPRING

[A L'ORIENTALE.]

Now comes the merry spring-time when the air
Is scented with the breath of budding flowers,
O'er all the world in freshly leaf'd bowers
Blithe Corydon doth woo his Phyllis fair.

The throstle's mellow throat

Now pipes a gleesome note :

Sweet sounds the coo of cushat in the pine,

Soft heralding the May.

When all the world is gay.

(Get for me, boy, that cholera-belt of mine,

Find the blue specs, and bid the washerman

Clean my old whites and flannels, if he can).

Now from her wintry sleep wakes Mother Earth.

And decks herself anew with robe of green,

While all the thousand voices that have been

Silent so long, rouse Echo with their mirth.

The young man and the dove

Turn now to thoughts of love :

Fair Amaryllis walks in shady nooks—

Sweet blossoms everywhere

Breathe gladness in the air.

(Put up the punkah, varlet, on its hooks,

Bring out mosquito-nets and make good store

Of Keating and carbolic, as before).

Now the soft Zephyrs, born in sunny isles,
Startle the wood nymph in her leafy lair,
Or kiss the tresses of Neaera's hair,
T'ntil she whispers in her sleep and smiles—

All gladsome days are these

For faun and Naiades—

Seaward the sunlight danceth on the waves

Joy, joy to everything

Thou bearest with thee, spring !

*(Soon, varlet, shall I send thee through the graves
To lure the scissor-grinder from his tree
And bring the mangled carcass back to me).*



A YULE TIDE FEAST

There had been a hunt tiffin and a good deal of the wine which we drink here under the name of port ; after that I had ridden wildly across country, as it seemed to me, for several hours, until I eventually found myself rubbing my head in a ditch. Then, having caught the pony (badly lamed), I had walked some six miles before I found a man to lead him home and another to pull me there in a ricksha. Therefore, at seven o'clock I was not feeling at all keen on going to Melbin's Xmas dinner. I was tired ; I had just got into a state of dreamy comfort by my own fireside, with a pipe and a glass of something or other ; so that when the boy came in with my clothes and said it was time to dress, I confess to having made use of remarks which did not sound like "goodwill towards men." However, there was nothing for it ; so, struggling into my togs and casting one lingering farewell glance at my warm room and bed, I went out (to enjoy myself, ha ha !) into the raw night air.

My recollections of getting to Melbin's are indistinct ; I was undoubtedly tired, and I think I must have slept in the ricksha on the way. At all events I found myself yawning as I made my way upstairs to the drawing-room. They are very merry, I reflected, as I paused to adjust a rosebud in my button hole ; judging by the noise, very merry indeed. And I walked in.

"Merry Xmas, merry Xmas," shouted Melbin, rushing at me in the cheeriest way. He had a sherry decanter in one hand and a plate of sardines in the other. "Many of them," he went on, looking at the sardines.

"Thanks ; only one for me," said I, and took it with the sugar-tongs. Melbin went off into a corner with the rest and shared them with two men in riding breeches and pink coats.

I was looking for my hostess, to wish her the compliments of the season, when she bobbed up suddenly (from behind a cabinet which was covered with puddings) and came

quickly towards me. She was wearing an apron, cut bottle-shaped, and had a large bunch of mistletoe in her hair.

"A merry Xmas," she said; and the mistletoe waved threateningly in my direction.

"Madam," I replied, "I am too old for that kind of merriment. Besides which, there are others;" and I looked meaningly towards Melbin, who had finished the sherry and was balancing the decanter on his nose.

"Sir, you mistake me," and she held out a hand, all covered with flour, for me to shake. "That, Mr. Spiffins, is the flour of a blameless life. I have been making those puddings"—she pointed to the cabinet—"as a little surprise. They are cabinet puddings."

Melbin interrupted her. "Spiffins," he said, "will you take in Miss Squills? Third place to the right, behind the sideboard—next the ham." Then, in a deep aside, "From Australia, a little *passée*, but you'll excuse that, won't you?"

"The ham?" said I.

"No, the lady; she's writing a book. We're all going to be in it, so *do* be careful."

"Introduce me," said I. He did; and the lady made a note of my name on her shirt front.

Then we went in to dinner. The first course was walnuts and crackers, with port; and a pleasant old gentleman opposite got up to propose "The Old Folks at Home."

Melbin rapped loudly on his wife's head with a spoon. "A toast," he cried, "a toast from the best-bred." Then he began passing bottles at a terrific pace, shouting "port, there, hard-a-port; the glass is steady, sir, and a fine night."

"Who is the old gentleman?" enquired Miss Squills, opening a cracker with her teeth.

"That, madam," said I, "is the Oldest Resident. He came out here when the streets were very narrow and has never quite got over it. He was at the battle of Muddy Flat—and has been a little muddier and very flat ever since; he remembers the opening of the port, with feelings too deep for words. Hush, he is beginning his speech." (Miss Squills began writing on the tablecloth).

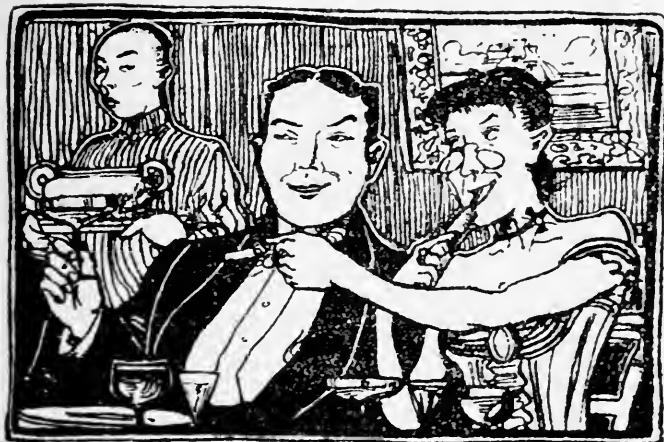
"The Old Folks at Home," began the Oldest Resident, with a sob in his voice. "God bless 'em!—and the young ones

too," he went on (looking at the Porringer children); "all at home. And best place for 'em. Wish I was there myself;" and the Oldest Resident sat down. Everybody cheered.

"To be able to make a neat after-dinner speech," said I, "is a thing very rare in Shanghai. Quite a gift, isn't it?"

"Quite," assented my neighbour. "But that wasn't an after-dinner speech, so it don't count? I'm quite hungry still." Just then they brought in the turkey.

"Do you know," said Womble, who sat next to her on the other side, "why that bird is like the Oldest Resident?" He didn't wait for an answer, but went on, "Because he's stuffed with chestnuts." Womble was evidently a wag.



Miss Squills turned to me. "After what has occurred to the Armenians," she said, "I think any jests about Turkey are in bad taste, even Turkey in Asia. Let us change the conversation. Tell me, who is the pretty girl over there?"

"The one wearing the rather tired expression?"

"No, the one with the pink gown. I mean; next the man in riding clothes. And oh, what are they eating? Why don't you get me some?"

The riding man had found a plum cake and some peanuts and was making sandwiches with them, but he refused to

share. "In this crowd," he explained, "we take the cake; tell her (meaning Miss Squills) it's weight for age, and keep on waiting."

"Just like the Race Club," remarked Miss Squills (which shows how little she knew). "Who are they?"

"Sport and Gossip," said L. "He's Sport; she's Gossip. \$15 a year. But let's talk about something else. Were you in church this morning?"

"Yes," she murmured. "How sweet, when far from home, to hear the herald angels sing, isn't it?"

"North-China Herald angels," said Wumble. (But she heeded him not).

"It carried me back to the old country," she went on but again the wag rushed in:—

"Cheap freight," he said, "but how did you get back in time for dinner?"

"This isn't dinner," she replied. "I've had nothing to eat." And Wumble, with a groan, admitted the reproach.

"I would have gone," said the Oldest Resident, "but I can't stand those bells. They make my teeth ache. I pay for a pew but I can't use it while they ring those things." "Hard times, hard chimes," he murmured; "the trustees say they got em to match the choir. I've appealed in vain."

"Appeal against a peal," said the wag. "Level betting." Just then they brought in the pudding. The hostess said she had made it herself, with the help of the Sanitary Board. Melbin went to the cupboard for brandy and soon had it in a blaze. The flames spread rapidly, and, just as Miss Squills began to write on my collar, I heard the fire-bell ring.

"Mih-ho-loongs," I shouted, "say the word and down comes your house." We were the first to unreeel and only three houses were burned. My boy says I had not taken off my clothes; but I remember getting home early in the morning with a mixed attire of riding coat and fireman's boots. I haven't seen Melbin since; but the funny part of it is that there is nothing in the papers about a fire at his house,

THE DISPASSIONATE LOVER

[RECOMMENDED AS A SUITABLE AFTER-DINNER SONG]

It is not mine to sign the charms and grace
Which, I believe, lurk in my lady's face,
To write no madrigals to me is given
Wherein her eyes outshine the stars in heaven
[She loves not jesting : it were out of place
If I wrote sonnets to her pretty face]

Not mine in flowing melodies to tell
The charms (now ripening) that I know so well ;
Not mine to serenade : not mine to keep
The lover's vigil o'er his lady's sleep
[There is no time in melody to tell
My lady's charms and walk the kid as well]

But mine it is to follow in her train
The social round (her pleasure and my pain),
To earn, as best I can, our daily bread,
To buy new bonnets for her dainty head,
To make ends meet, a never-ending bane,
And soothe the irate shroff that raiseth Cain.

BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

It had been a beastly day, and now it was followed by a still beastlier night. From where we lay on our long cane chairs in the mess-room verandah, Hartland and I had been listening for an hour or more to a dreary drip, drip of rain on the greasy street below and breathing the unholy night air of the native city, a compound whose chief ingredients are stale fish, decayed vegetation and over-crowded humanity. In the sticky dampness that pervaded everything, cigarettes were too rank and cigars too flabby for any virtue to proceed from them: so we simply sat there, in the dark, while rasping crickets and a yelping pariah attended to the wakefulness of our nerves.

Behind us, from the neighbouring water streets and from the swarming bee-hives of Canton beyond, sounded the never-ending monotonous hum of native life—that voice which is never stilled, night or day, along the banks of the Pearl river. In front, across the house-tops, lay a glimmer of water and the lights of a steamer at anchor, but the rain had stopped the usual brisk water-traffic, and scarcely a lantern moved on the Honam side. Below us, three or four beggars, crouched under a mat-shed, were gambling by the light of a flickering wick, and the watchman's tattoo sounded like a death-rattle in the gloom.

Hartland turned restlessly in his chair. Poor fellow, he had had the blues all day, and small blame to him. He was just out from home furlough and there had been a love affair, gone wrong, as everything seemed to go with him in those days. I broke the silence by suggesting the only thing that occurred to me, a whiskey and soda.

"What's the use," he groaned. "You can't drown this sort of thing with all the whiskey on earth. I'm going to cut it."

"We'd all like to do that," I said, "if the ways and means were in sight. As things are, we've got to grin and bear it: there's always the hope of a transfer."



"IT'S NO USE TRYING TO FACE IT"



"Yes, from Hell to Sheol, and back again. Great Heavens, man, if you had told me ten years ago that I was coming to this, I'd have forestalled Providence with a cup of oblivion. One day of this life takes all the terror out of the eternal damnation creed."

"You've got nerves, old man; brace up! This cursed weather can't last, and you'll be all right when the wind changes."

"Bah! It's a living sepulchre! Moaning doves, dyspepsia and decay by day; purgatory and a thousand devils by night. You saw that corpse just outside my office to-day? Not a pretty sight, is he? Well, man, believe me or not, I'd change places with him willingly. I've had enough of it."

This was getting serious, and I made up my mind to see the chief and get poor Jim a run to Japan. Meanwhile, the demons must be exorcised. I hinted at the Japanese idea.

"No, old fellow, it won't do. I tell you I'm sick of the East." He gulped a stiff peg and began to walk swiftly up and down. It reminded me of a polar bear I had once seen pacing his narrow cage at the Zoo.

"It's no use trying to face it," he went on. "One wasn't intended to live in this way. Live? It isn't living! Sometimes I lie awake at night listening to the accursed noises of the city, and I feel that another day of it must drive me mad. Then I shut my eyes and think of home—I see the lights of Oxford Street, I hear the whirl of the hansom and the busmen's cheery chorus; all the blessed sights and sounds that I've lost—and for what? For what, I say? Damn it, just look around you? Would any sane man purchase our brilliant prospects at such a price? To live like a prisoner and die like a dog? We're mad, I tell you."

My leave was due in six months, his in five years; naturally we looked at things from a different stand-point. If I had just come back, with five years of it ahead, I should probably have agreed with him in a milder way. But Jim, poor chap, went in heavily for studying Chinese to kill time; I didn't, and here again I had the advantage of him as far as the chances of sanity were concerned.

He stopped in his walk and looked towards the river. The steamer lights shone dimly through heavy mist, and the

clang of a bell came heavily over the water. Then he began again, speaking rapidly as he walked, "Who's the fool who drivels about hearing the East a callin'?" he said. "Kipling, is it? Well, I wish he'd try a month of this sort of thing! Give me a billet as stoker on a homeward-bound ship, and the voice of the East may call any idiot it likes. I'd sooner be a boot-black in London than Minister Plenipotentiary in this God-forsaken country!"

He came and stood by my chair. "Don't think I'm going mad, old fellow. I'm not, though it may sound like it, I should be far madder if this kind of existence satisfied me. But it doesn't, and there's the end of it. I suppose there's still hedging and ditching to be done in English lanes if it comes to the worst."

A mournful song, with tinkling of native guitars had just begun in a fish-shop over the way. It was the *comp de grace*. I suggested the Club and billiards.

"No, old man, that's too slow. I don't want to talk. We'll play *fan tan* at Sai Loong's and make a night of it. Get all your hard-earned dollars and come along."

So we went. I spent a month's pay in the purchase of Jim's antidote, and it was cheap at the price. As dawn was breaking we came home through the evil smelling streets, stepping over the beggars and dogs that lay on the slimy flags, and Jim's soul, through sheer weariness, listened no more to the voices of the night. He went to bed and slept.

But the West was a callin' him. A week later he got leave to go to Hongkong, and that was the last of Jim Hartland's acquaintance with the East. He worked his passage home on a tramp, and I got a letter from him at home expressing sympathy with the hopelessness of *my* future. I believe he is now a guard—and quite happy—on the Midland Railway.

It is probably just as well for the good of civilisation that we don't all work hard at Chinese, and that our love-affairs occasionally prosper. But I have known other cases than Hartland's, and some of them ended much worse.

THE PASSING OF SUMMER

When in the silent watches of the night
Lying awake upon the restless bed,
That has been witness of my summer plight,
I hear the call of curlews overhead;
When the great voice of the Siberian wind,
After long silence, sings from northern climes
Of winter evenings, where, with close-drawn blind
Men talk o'er wine and weed, of bygone times
And call life good—

 Ah then, with drowsy smile
And well content, I turn again to sleep;
The very cats that sport upon the tile,
Unheeded and uncurs'd, their vigils keep,
For with to-morrow end the summer's woes
And comfort comes, port wine, and decent clothes.





"GRANDON BECOMES A ROUÉ IN POSSE"

"CHEZ FIGARO"

This morning, while I was being shaved by the deft Japanese who usually attends me, my consciousness—generally latent during the operation—fixed itself on Bowles. He was next me on the line of the white-robed elect, so that, without being offensive, I could observe him in the mirror. Now Bowles, taken by himself, is not interesting. This morning, however, he was absorbing into his system the *New York Police News*, and thus engaged he served to illustrate a pet theory of mine—to wit, that there exist in the atmosphere of a barber's shop certain subtle and evil influences whose effects are obvious but whose causes it were difficult to assign.

If it were not so, why should Bowles read and gloat over the *Police News*? From the full page front picture—which depicts a lady in striped stockings hanging out of a window, to the famous pugilists and infamous literature of the back, he goes deliberately through it. And when he puts it down, Grittle takes it up; Grittle, who is a pillar of the church and carries the plate round solemnly on Sundays. Neither of them would touch the thing with a pair of tongs anywhere else, they would not let it into their houses or belong to any club which took it in, but here chez Figaro, it is the correct thing, as natural to the place as lather and bay rum. Which conclusion brings us to another and a wider theory, viz. that all our moralities and conventions are matters of time.

mean to say that the lack of moral tone at Figaro's is peculiar to the toilet clubs (blessed word) of Shanghai or the East—far from it. The observation holds good, I believe, universally. Certainly, I have never seen a barber's shop, however humble and remote, in which the *Police News* was not a prominent feature. It would appear to be the outward sign of a barbarous freemasonry, if I may be allowed the humble jest. Where there exists a general supply there must undoubtedly be a general demand; the atmosphere at the barber's is the same the world over.

If you doubt it, observe the average man as he comes



"EYING HIMSELF OPENLY
IN THE GLASS"

in for his morning shave. He leaves his respectability on the very door-step. See him take off his coat—with how truculent an air he hands it to the fawning Asiatic. The nod which he gives you has in it a *sous entend* of rakishness; his "good morning" is that of a man who, knowing he is a wild blade, is not ashamed. He lolls into his easy chair with a devil-may-care swagger, and puts up his chin to the brush as might a satrap after some ambrosial feast. During the operation his attitude suggests an utter indifference to time and his fellow creatures; he basks in idleness and the manipulation of his head as might have done Apollo of old, preparing to go forth, with charms renewed, to conquest. And when all is done, with what a gay-dog air he plants his hat on his head,

a trifle to one side. See him stand while his coat is being brushed, eying himself openly in the glass. And then—then—as he emerges again into the sober light of day, as he puts forth from his lungs the air of the barber's shop, limply he

drops from the unreal heights. Again, until he shall require another shave, he becomes a commonplace and respectable citizen. The fall is a sharp one; from Seville, Figaro's home, to Seven Dials.

As certain as the effect of the lethal chamber on a dog, is that of the barber's atmosphere on a man; and the tamer he is by education and habit, the more marked will be the working of its subtle and evil influence. Grandon, father of six, becomes a *roué in posse* as, with his cigar protruding from a halo of lather, he scans the week's record of crime—and to me, scanning him furtively, he looks as if he would give the whole six for a week of riot and orgy. But in this I may be doing him an injustice. I hope so.

The effects then are evident, obtrusive and not to be gainsaid; but who shall trace for us their primary causes? To what distant origin of evil must we go back to lay them bare? Analysis and introspection fail us, philosophical enquiry is in vain: they are beyond our ken, elusive. And yet there must exist somewhere a valid and traceable connection between the removal of hirsute matter and the weakening of man's moral fibre. Is there not perhaps in the old story of Samson's cropping by Delilah and its results, the dim presentiment of a universal truth? Assuredly there is; and a warning to boot with regard to any introduction of the sex as barbers. Which warning, by the way, is disregarded in Japan.

Even the common slang of the day, adjuring Smith to "keep his hair on" expresses no doubt the general sense that with it he loses something of virtue—and the Oriental reverence for a beard surely conveys a tacit rebuke to those who daily expose themselves to the associations of the razor. Unconsciously we recognise the fact; in art—where all our holy men are bearded—and in our own lives through which all go regularly shaven. In this trifling with a secretly recognised evil, in this daily dalliance in an unholy spot, lies probably the secret of Figaro's success; his shop marks a green oasis in the sandy monotony of our dreary respectable lives. There Bowles, before beginning the day's dull round, can be for a few brief moments a ruffling blade of his own imaginings; there, at least, Grandon can forget the six and dream bright scarlet dreams (as Oscar says) while his beard and his conscience fade

from him together. *Dulce est desipere in loco*, sings the poet : Jekyll must at times revert to Hyde—it is therefore perhaps well that Figaro provides us with a moment's respite from the grievous reality of our own respectable decorum.



THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

I stood upon the bridge whose arches span
The Thames at Westminster, and saw the throng
Of the great city's life, a tide that ran

Mysterious, unceasing, dark and strong,
Till, wearied of the thought-compelling sight,

I sought the silence of a slumbering street.
What is this life, I said, which, day and night

With restless ebb and flow doth ever beat
Upon the rocks of chance and destiny?

A few years, hence, and lo, it leaves behind
No sign henceforth to all eternity!

And, musing thus, there came into my mind
The memory of another bridge which stands

Splendid, but silent, by an eastern stream,
An idle stream, beside whose reed-girt sands

Once stood a city, gone now as a dream,
Ages ago, from dawn till close of day.

Ere London was, they hurried in Cathay.



A DAY AT THE TRADITION OFFICE

It was noon of a sultry August day and the deserted precincts of Westminster lay steeped in unwonted sunshine. In St. Stephen's and Parliament Street were none of the usual signs of legislative activity wherein determined droves of transatlantic tourists delight to recognise the machinery of a great government. If the wheels of Empire were revolving, no indication of the fact came to gladden weary Baedekered schoolmarms from the other side. Robert, majestic even in perspiration, remained the only outward and visible sign of dominion and power at the centre of civilisation. Stuffy bus-loads of parsons and country cousins were converging on a remnants sale at the stores : these looked, as they passed, on the slumberous majesty of their government's offices with the listless unspeculative eye of the taxpayer.

I had business at the Tradition Office relating to unredressed injury suffered by a British subject in one of those remote corners of the globe where the breed loves to wander and stray. In the peaceful backwater of Dorney Street the tide of London life moved not at all : to a stranger, its dignified calm would have suggested rather some prehistoric shrine than the central point of a nation's activity. Blue-grey pigeons were feeding peacefully in the solemn court, where a hansom-driver waited listlessly for his fare, exchanging drowsy commentaries on the art of government with a porter, resplendent in white gloves and buttons. Nothing here to remind one of the storm and stress of the realities beyond, nothing to speak of lost legions of Britons overseas, unless you could find it in the mournful statues of departed statesmen or the whirl of a little Parisian's skirt as she came familiarly down the broad stairs—and her appearance there struck the mind as inappropriate, bringing with it a vague sense of mystery and unreality. Of a person whose manly breast bore glittering trophies of many a good campaign I enquired my way, asking for the local habitation of the Hon. William Dryftwoode, to whom the initiated had referred me. It is unnecessary to

describe particularly the place occupied by the Hon. William in the order of things created : suffice it to say that in the House he is regarded as one of the permanent and sacred institutions of the country, without whose assistance the whole thing would probably go to pieces.

My friend of the medals first looked at me doubtfully, then at his watch. The hour, he reproachfully observed, was but half-past twelve : the Hon. Mr. Dryftwoode seldom came to his office before two. Also, he was leaving town to-morrow. Would I wait ? Having come some thousands of miles, I thought I would, and was accordingly shown through pillared corridors to a high-ceilinged waiting-room, where, probably to induce a proper spirit of humility, the enquiring Britisher is edified with French and German newspapers only. On my way to this quiet resting-place I was impressed by overhearing one very beautiful young gentleman telling another in a languid voice that " Branborne had been stuffing them up as usual last night," a remark which appeared to afford them both no little satisfaction.

I spent an hour or more between the *Figaro* and the contemplation of a pair of pelicans making leisurely toilet on their little island kingdom in St. James's Park over the way. Surely, thought I, no more dignified, no more enviable profession can there be than to sit looking out day by day on such a scene as this, a constant procession of the human comedy, set in the finest piece of decorative gardening in Europe ; small wonder if the sordid cares of statecraft, of diplomacy and policies fade, under such conditions, to their rightful insignificance. And after all, if you can only relegate Whitaker and blue books to their proper place, and look at things in the right philosophic vein, what are all your international relations more than the aimless buzzing of fussy insects ? This, I imagine, is the real attitude of the Tradition Office towards all questions except, perhaps, that of salaries and birthday honours, and its explanation lies, no doubt, in the view across St. James's Park.

At about two o'clock a functionary, heavy with exposition of beer-fed slumber, came to announce that he had taken my card in to Mr. Dryftwoode, who would be disengaged in a few minutes. He disappeared, and thereafter in those spac-



"DUTY BIDDEN, I UNBURDENED MY SOUL."



ious halls deep silence brooded undisturbed for an hour. The park was almost deserted, the pelicans were dosing, and I had long since read all the selected scurrility of the French and German press. At three o'clock it occurred to me that probably everyone had gone home, leaving me, forgotten and alone, in this melancholy place. The thought was sufficient to drive me out again into the echoing corridors, searching eagerly for a human being. Having found the beer-fed one, sleeping in a box evidently intended for that purpose, I sent him off once more to see whether the Hon. William had succumbed to the weight of empire. In a few moments he came back, mopping a troubled brow. "Mr. Dryftwoode will see you at once, sir." Then, in apologetic undertones,—"fact is, sir, we forgot all about you. It's a 'ot day, sir, isn't it?"

The Hon. William Dryftwoode, postprandial slumbers suggested on his heavy eyelids, bade me welcome; a stately gentleman in his early seventies. The scene of his labours was a splendid example of British solidity and comfort—high windows, severe decoration, heavy morocco-lined furniture, ponderous volumes, portfolios and despatch boxes—all was in keeping with the high office of those elected and paid to keep watch and ward over the empire's destinies. And this, thought I, is he whose name is a household word in all those lands and seven seas where the Britisher strives to uphold his birthright. From this, the fountain-head, the Most Honourable the Marquess of Climesdown derives his inspired utterances; in this spot is framed and begotten that flabby invertebrate thing known as Britain's foreign policy, cursed by Anglo-Saxons throughout the five continents. Instinctively I looked out on to the park. The pelicans were still dosing.

Duly bidden, I unburdened my soul; the story of one Englishman, whose wrongs the empire had left unredressed, was told. The tale was a simple one and the Hon. William was sympathy itself. The first thing to be done, it appeared, was to communicate with one of the officials of the Colonial Office. Would I call to-morrow, when he would be glad to give me a letter to the gentleman in question and discuss the matter further?

I gently deprecated the suggestion. "If equally convenient," said I, "and since I understand that you are leaving

town to-morrow. I would prefer to take the letter to-day," Mr. Dryftwoode made a pencil note on his blotting pad—referring no doubt to indiscreet porters—and accepted the position with well bred courtesy.

"By all means—you shall have it at once." Selecting two sheets of paper and a quill pen, the arm-chair was drawn up carefully to the desk as if in preparation for a solemn and unwonted rite. The paper was of small "note" size, requiring frequent applications from a mediæval sand-caster, and progress, compared with that of ordinary epistolary effort, was slow. While the shrill squeaking quill continued its laborious task I took mental notes of the scene, firmly convinced that in the years to come their recollection would afford full and satisfactory explanation of things otherwise inexplicable. The inventory is with me still—the neatly folded papers, bound with that

"Foul frail red tape which strangles ever
The honest energetic fool's endeavour,"

blue paper "squills" on the mantle-piece, backed by a neat row of invitation cards; the diaries, schedules, maps and records, each in its appointed, unfrequented place. In the centre, huge, symbolic, and of threatening mien, stood the waste-paper basket, receptacle of myriad hopes and fears. Only the historic pigeon-holes were wanting; these doubtless stretch, in miles of catacombs, beneath the building.

My train of thought was interrupted by the ceasing of the quill's long-drawn protests.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Dryftwoode, looking up "what did you say is the name of our consul at Chindor; I have forgotten it for the moment."

I ventured to remind him that the consulate in question had been abolished three years before.

"Ah, so it was. How very unfortunate.—The Treasury, of course." He said "Treasury" as other men use terms of reproach.

Once more the quill's lament smote the silence; then suddenly it ceased and he rang a tinkling hand-bell.

A young man came in, like Agag, delicately. He had a pimply face, eye-glasses, and that indescribable alien air noticeable in most of those who nowadays compete successfully for

our civil service exams. His name, it appeared, was Werther, and he looked it. "I am writing," said the Hon. William, "a letter for this gentleman, who has business at the Colonial Office. It refers, Werther, to that incident at Chindor; no doubt you remember? I propose to address myself to Sir Francis Wobbell, who was originally interested in the case. Can you tell me whether he is in town at present?"

The confidential clerk scratched one leg with the other and looked curiously at his chief. "That was a year ago, sir," he said; "Sir Francis resigned in April, and has since gone abroad. A letter to Sir Arthur Skuttell would probably be best." There was no sign on his face either of surprise or any other emotion.

"Why, bless my soul, that is so—how stupid of me to forget! Now that I come to think of it, he wrote to me from Norway a few weeks ago. Lovely spot he was in too; knew it well myself in sixties." And the dear old gentleman stroked his contemplative brow in silence. The clerk softly withdrew.

Apologising for the delay, a second letter was written, wherewith in due season I went forth. Of my subsequent journeyings and fortunes between the Tradition and the Colonial Offices, this is not the place to speak; but between them there was brought home to me light and knowledge as touching those things which underlie and explain the mysteries of our system of government. Now, when I hear—as one frequently does—abuse of a minister or consul *in partibus infidelium*, there comes to me the memory of that August afternoon, the soft slumbering Tradition Office, with its old-world ideals and fixed habits of uselessness, and remembering the pelicans in their sunny English garden, I join not in the chorons of cursing. What is the good of it?



CELIA

When lovely Celia walks abroad
Spring winds blow soft and light,
Each bird trills forth his sweetest lay
To greet so fair a sight;
The sun, dispersing every cloud,
All ardent, from above,
Sends forth his brightest rays to kiss
The dimpled cheek I love.

Then Celia, coy as she is fair,
Beneath that searching gaze,
With gentle art avoids the warmth
Of great Apollo's rays;
With little deprecating sighs,
And most bewitching grace,
She holds a dainty parasol
To shade her pretty face.

Alas, for me, in sorrier plight,
Who gaze on Celia's eyes,
No art can shield me from the light
That in their beauty lies:
Nay, even should I gaze no more,
And from their brilliance fly,
Nought else I know, where'er I go,
But their sweet memory.



"MAN . . . INVITED HIS NEIGHBOUR TO DINNER"

ON THE GENTLE ART OF GIVING DINNERS

Last night I dined with Grandon; and as I made my way home on foot (for the stomach's sake) through silent streets, I found myself wishing, as Cassio of Venice wished long ago, that "courtesy would invent some other custom of entertainment." And I went to bed in the spirit of melancholy, for I know that against the conventions of society common-sense wages war in vain.

Not that, gastronomically speaking, there was anything amiss with Grandon's dinner. On the contrary, his "Good Angelica had seen to the baked meats," and the table groaned under a mass of napery, flowers and silver—all the pretty *faux-de-rats* with which your modern housewife decks out the hospitable board. The cooking too was more than passable, and there lay in each *entrée*, sauce and *entremets* that element of the unexpected which one meets at times in the work of superior Chinese *chefs*—an element of pleasure tempered with unknown risks. Yes, it was certainly a better meal than I get at the Club; and yet, in the very thick of it, while removing the crust from a *vol au vent aux truffes*, I was heartily wishing myself back there. The certain prospect of what was to come hung heavy on my soul, and I could have sighed, with honest Pistol, "for any ale house in London."

Agès ago, toward the dawn of days, the first instinct of primitive man, inherited by him from anthropoid apes, was to eat his food in a place apart, turning his back on his fellows. To this day the custom survives here and here, held only in

check by the fetters of our so-called civilisation. Spencer traces it in the rites of Polynesian tribes, Wallace found it respected among the Malays, and I have noted it myself in the Scotch highlands. The instinct itself survives universally, latent in the breast of every man, and brought occasionally to the surface by atavism or the unwonted "clash of atoms." You see it as plainly (if you look for it) in the highest circles of society as at the corner table of the chop-house; but conventionally we ignore it. As for me, on occasions like Grandon's dinner, the voices of free untrammelled forbears whisper fiercely from out their glorious past and I would fain go out, slay my food on the wild plains and eat it alone under the stars. But there are few opportunities for doing so; the nearest thing to it is an up-country trip, and even there my boy watches me from soup to celery.

When man, emerging from his primeval and happiest state, began to be gregarious, he first put clothing upon his person and then invited his neighbour to dine, in token of a foolish desire for peace. From a study of the few records left by these ancients, it would appear that the inviter had usually something to gain by the invitation—either the party invited was the stronger or fiercer, or he could repay such unusual affability by desirable services. In this respect we still adhere closely enough to the original ideas of hospitality. From the very first, however, there was something particularly solemn and significant in the admission of strangers to the rites of the table; the occasion was fraught with ceremony, and the subsequent relations of host and guest entailed certain mutual obligations of friendship and goodwill. The life (and probably the reputation) of any man who dined with a patriarch was safe in that house for all time. Then as the ages rolled on, and man's "scope of correspondence" with his fellows grew wider, the feeling of sacredness of hospitality deepened—and especially, as the weaker sex was kept religiously in the back-ground, did the act of eating together bind men with bonds of faith unbreakable. It was man to man in those days, for war or peace; as it is still with the wandering Arab, so was it then; to eat of a man's salt was to become even as his brother. There would be a decline, I imagine, in the consumption of salt, were such terms binding on us to-day.

For it is undoubtedly with hospitality as with many another of the unseen foundations on which society, as we know it, rests: the thing itself, the name, remains with us, but the conditions and needs which produced and required it are gone with the dust of forgotten centuries. Even the wholesome joviality and cheer of a hundred years ago have forsaken our *fin-de-siècle* entertainments: our forefathers, when the ladies had tasted their glass of sack, had at least the excuse of a bottle or two of port apiece, for bringing them together, and they probably respected each other the better for sleeping it off together under the same table. But now-a-days—bah! it is all part of the smooth, well-oiled machinery whereby society revolves to its own satisfaction amidst the bowings and scrapings of little bunches of marionettes. We are no longer real live human beings—but puppets all; living by rules that we did not make and dare not break; dining out, as we do everything else, on the lines prescribed for us in the manuals of etiquette and deportment.

I perceive that I have approached dangerously near to moralising—that, my friends, is simply the result of meringues and gorgonzola. Let us beat a hasty retreat, however, from any such peril, and return rather to our muttons—I mean Grandon's dinner.

It was an entertainment typical of our degeneration from things rational. For your model and sensible feasting should mean, I take it, that goodly foregathering of intimates wherein choice viands do but afford enjoyment subsidiary to the pleasures of familiar intercourse. But Grandon's invitations had been sent out on the most modern principle, a principle that greatly resembles the parochial issue of souptickets. As I took my seat at table, I found myself furtively scanning the cards whereon were set forth the names of my neighbours, even as a traveller looks anxiously on the company in some lonely wayside inn. Heigho! Oh my right was Mrs. Turtle, a lady whom I knew (from study of the newspapers) to have been married here a year ago and to have presented Mr. Turtle quite recently with a male child. She was obviously outside the pale of rational conversation. To my left sat a young gentleman who looked as if he had just left school, but who assured me that the government he represents had just sent

him hither on matters of importance from Swatow. He found me dull, doubtless, for he addressed his conversation after the first entrée to the girl on his left; a conversation which seemed to consist chiefly of "when I was in Swatow." Opposite me sat Gaytors, who discussed the merits of every pony in the

Settlement with anyone who would listen to him—I didn't. So, after a fruitless effort to get Mrs. Turtle's mind off the baby, I ate my gorgeous meal in silence, amusing myself between the courses in an attempt to guess at the reasons which had led to each guest's presence.

From this melancholy analysis I was forced to the conclusion that dinners like Grandon's are the result of

- 1—A desire for social advancement.
- 2—The furthering of "pidgin."
- 3—A stern sense of duty, and (sometimes)
- 4—A spirit of misplaced friendliness.

My own invitation had been issued, I knew, under the combined influences of 3 and 4.

Shades of the "Mermaid Tavern" and "Three Tuns," to what base uses has civilisation brought us! How far are we from those palmy days—only 150 years ago—when the good Dean tells Stella that he will talk business over his morning chocolate with any man, but at night he will dine with those whom his soul loves! Is there, I wonder, a single one of us who can honestly say that he, or rather she, has not breathed a sigh of relief on receiving a polite refusal to an equally polite invitation? I doubt it. And what, in stern logic, must we conclude from such an admission? Only this, that for every one of us who desires to be at amity with his fellows, the price demanded by our

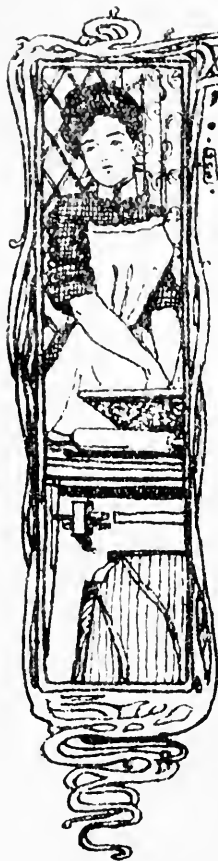


A PALE YOUNG MAN
GAVE FORTH A COMIC SONG

social conventions is so high that in its fortunate and occasional remission lies great relief. It is a mad world.

Of what followed the comfortable ten minutes' smoke at Grandon's it is unnecessary to speak. Which of us has not endured these things? Who but the veriest Timon absolute has not suffered this modern martyrdom? I look back on it now, from the comfort of my armchair, and shudder. That fearsome period of "a little music," when Mrs. Turtle sang "Twickenham Ferry," and another timid soul breathed out an Italian love song of most abandoned sentiment; when a pale young man gave forth a melancholy comic song through his nose, and another played the violin for all the world like Shylock's woollen bagpipe. How, after each of these efforts, we all sighed and said "thank you"—presumably because they had ceased. And then, because the "leading lady" was afraid (though longing) to go, how we all sat down to a round game of cards, ghosts, or nap, or some equally rollicking form of wild enjoyment until that leading lady received a premonitory kick under the table from her weary lord, and incontinently we fled out into the darkness.

These things would make a misanthropist of Mark Tapley himself. Personally, I am neither cynic nor recluse and I can enjoy the fellowship of congenial society. But what I would like to ask is: Cannot the gentle art of giving dinners be in some manner amended by general consent? Can modern ingenuity find no tolerable substitute for the round game of cards and the little music aforesaid? And, if not, should it not be lawful for a man, without outraging propriety, to go home before the leading lady? But the "soup ticket" form of social entertainment cannot be civilisation's last word on the subject. "Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward to what they were before," sings the immortal bard. Therein must lie our hope.



TO DOROTHY.

(A RONDEAU)

I want to say, dear Dorothy,
That yesterday I chanced to see
You, from my window, making meat
For Xmas pies. You looked so sweet,
So full of old-time housewifery:

And never did Penelope,
The Wise, make such pâtisserie!
But, Dorothy, low at your feet

I want to say

That it is not enough for me
(Though I've accepted gratefully)
One Xmas day such fare to eat,
Ah no, *ma mie*! When next we meet
There's something (may I come to tea?)

I want to say!

A JAPANESE PASSPORT

(A.D. 1894)

Nikko was rejoicing in the presence of a Prince, and policemen were as thick as thieves. There were so many of them to the square mile that it behoved a careful person to ascertain what things a man might do and yet live. By personal experience we learned that our jinrickshas and horses might not travel by the same road as this sprig of Japanese royalty, that no man might look on It from his verandah, and that neither hat nor umbrella might shelter one's head while It passed. These were hints given us by hobbies (four feet six, with a sword) as occasion required, but as to the whole code of deportment, we were left in grievous ignorance. It was only seventeen years old, this pocket Mikado, and It wore a riding costume which consisted of a frock coat, white trousers, and an obviously second-hand hat; so that It's objection to being looked at was intelligible enough. Also It was followed by an assortment of grooms, major-generals, equerries and Prime Ministers, all very fierce and haughty, in spite of clothes that savoured of Astleys and the sawdust ring. Therefore, said I, it behoves us to go like Agag, delicately, and to avoid outraging any of the local proprieties. For although a few short years of H. B. M.'s protection still stand between us and the inside of Japanese goals, the possibility of being personally conducted by irate officials to the nearest Treaty Port was unpleasant enough. So, seeking out the hotel manager, I enquired in all humility what things a tourist might lawfully do; telling him at the same time that I put no trust in princes.

The manager, rubbing his knees, looked thoughtful. His experiences; both with globe trotters and policemen, have made him wary, and he never commits himself either in his own business or that of other people, except in the matter of bills. His eye wandered slowly round his den, seeking inspiration from the Chubb's safe and certain ancient and mysterious biscuit tins until it rested on the pigeon-hole where he keeps

our passports. Here he got an inspiration which he proceeded to put into English.

"The gendarme" he said, "shall see to obey the many Rocal Regulations. If you shall follow Rocal Regulations it is no trouble. Therefore you must now read passport and reform to it," and with that he handed me the document in question.

"Do the Local Regulations provide for a sending of princes," I enquired. I could not recall anything of the sort; in fact I was unaware that H. B. M.'s Consul had supplied me with any kind of information for the two dollars he levied—except a general intimation against trading or discharging firearms in the interior, a wise precaution. Again my native friend was troubled: he was evidently unprepared to act as a diplomatic agent between unwary strangers and the body politic of Dai Nippon. His brow contracted with burden of care.



"THEY'VE FORGOTTEN ONE OR TWO POINTS"

"The Prince is not Rocal Regulations—he shall laterly be Mikado of Japan" (this with indrawn and bated breath).

"It must be for all persons to respectful him and salute."
"But," he added as an afterthought, "it is one week more he shall be going to Tokio—then it is not so much gendarme." This reflection appeared to give the little man more satisfaction than the Presence itself; I have no doubt that mine host found it irksome at times.

Meanwhile I had been studying the passport. For two dollars worth of British Consular activity, it was imposing enough, and the fact that I had got it without undue delay was in itself worth the money. Moreover it had a red seal, a signature and a stamp on it with my name legibly filled in; all of which was extremely gratifying. But on the subject of Local Regulations, beyond stating generally that they must be observed, it was discreetly silent and unedifying. I subsequently discovered that they were fully given in Japanese on the back of the document, a fact which to my mind simply added insult to injury—for it gives the native bobby an obvious advantage over any traveller who cannot read Japanese. It is very possible however, that H. B. M.'s Consulates have not yet discovered the existence or meaning of the Japanese text: when they do, a rough translation will no doubt be given.

But to return to mine host. He was eyeing me anxiously all the time, hoping that the passport would remove my difficulties and myself; for the bourgeoisie in Japan does not like to discuss official matters. Therefore when I told him that, in spite of consular aid, I was still in parlous ignorance he looked gloomily into space and offered no solution of the problem. It was at this juncture that Providence intervened in the person of Hosea P. Shekkels, of New York, a man remarkable for great geniality, much wealth and an unquenchable thirst. From the bar he had gathered the drift of our conversation and from it he now emerged to my aid, as a god radiant from an automatic machine.

"Here ye are," he said, handing me a document from his pocket-book—"you'll find 'em all fair and square in that; not that they're going to help ye much in the matter of dealing with princes and such truck. Of all the one-horse dodgasted regulations I ever saw, they just snatch the bun. Come and wash your neck while you're wrestling with 'em? You'll need it."

I washed ; perusing meanwhile my friend's passport, as provided by the Great Republic. Here they were at last, these local regulations set out at length and, mark you, all for the sum of one dollar ! But there was nothing in them to guide one aright in the neighbourhood of princes ; no instructions concerning the rights and duties of aliens in the presence of Japanese royalty. Our case was evidently an unforeseen one.

The local regulations of Dai Nippon are like the Pleiades, in number seven, and they provide that foreigners travelling in the interior shall not travel at night in carriages without a light nor drive rapidly on narrow roads ; they forbid scribbling on temples and lighting fires in forests or hills ; they insist on due payment of ferry-tolls, and, lastly, they prohibit poaching on game preserves and attendance on horseback at fires. But none of these things affected me at the moment. I carry a light at all times—my pipe requires it—and, so far, I had seen neither carriages, ferries nor preserves in our wanderings. As to rapid driving, that is a matter which rests with the ricksha coolies ; and there have been so many scribbles on temples, since Miss Bird began it, that this subject is played out. I didn't want to light a fire anywhere in August—if I had the rain would soon have put it out—and if anyone else had lit one I certainly should not have attended it on horseback. A Japanese horse looks quite dangerous enough without using it to attend conflagrations.

"They've forgotten one or two points," said Hosea P. Shekels ; "they should have made it unlawful to navigate waterfalls and shut down on all playing with earthquakes. They should have warned us not to speak to the man at the wheel, also to keep off the grass. This thing is no use, anyhow ; it's incomplete."

I agreed with Hosea and left him telling the manager that Japan would have to alter her regulations before the revised treaties can come into force. The manager seemed quite agreeable.

But I, not knowing what to do in case of complications with the Court, and being unable to distinguish a prime minister from a postman in their present mixed garb, left Nikko and its prince on the following day. I had to walk to

the station, for His Highness, was going on a picnic, and had impounded all the rickshas to carry his beer and red blankets. The manager told me so and I believe him; for I met the Lord Chamberlain carrying a tea-pot and some dried fish. (I wish Lord Salisbury and Mr. Curzon had seen him.) This dignitary informed me that the Prince's name was Hara; but he seemed, from what I saw of him, very partial to Eatin.



AT THE RUINS OF WAN SHOU SHAN

My lady, long ere you and I
Appeared upon this mortal scene,
This was a spot in days gone by
That pleased the eye of many a queen ;

Here merry maids in satins bright,
Looked down upon yon lilled lake,
And took the same untaught delight
In life that butterflies may take.

Here minstrels sang and here the Court
Of Emperors, in summer days,
Enjoyed the evening air and sought
Amusement in *al fresco* plays.

Gone are those lords and ladies fair
Their names² are scarcely memories,
And not an echo in the air
Of all their old-time revelries ;

Yes, they are gone ; ah, lady mine,
The past for them ; for us, to-day ;
And never was such grace as thine
In any palace of Cathay !





THE PASSING OF TERENCE McMANUS

[A STUDY IN PATHOLOGY]

Slowly, along the palm-fringed road which leads to Colombo's Hospital from the Fort, a bullock ambulance bore Captain Terence McManus, his mortal coil struggling mightily against the first fierceness of typhoid. It was noon of a September day and the sunlight beat down mercilessly, slanting through the latticed sides of the clumsy vehicle; puffs of land-breeze came laden with damp heat, sprung from profuse vegetation rotting in far off jungles, and Terence knew vaguely that his lines were cast in unpleasant places. At intervals, when the Tamil driver raised his cursing of man or beast to a shriller note, or when, by some sudden jolting of the cart, the icebag slipped from his forehead, words uttered after the manner of seafarers bore witness that nerves and brain were keeping touch, impatiently enough, with his environment. At such times Nurse Edith, precariously seated on a narrow ledge by his pillow, would soothe him, speaking as to a restless, tired child, and instinctively noting the throbbing pulse with one cool hand laid on his. Thus, with doses of brandy and much bad language, came Terence McManus, erstwhile captain of the Yangtze steamer "Pilgrim," to the passenger ward, henceforth to be known therein as No. 3.

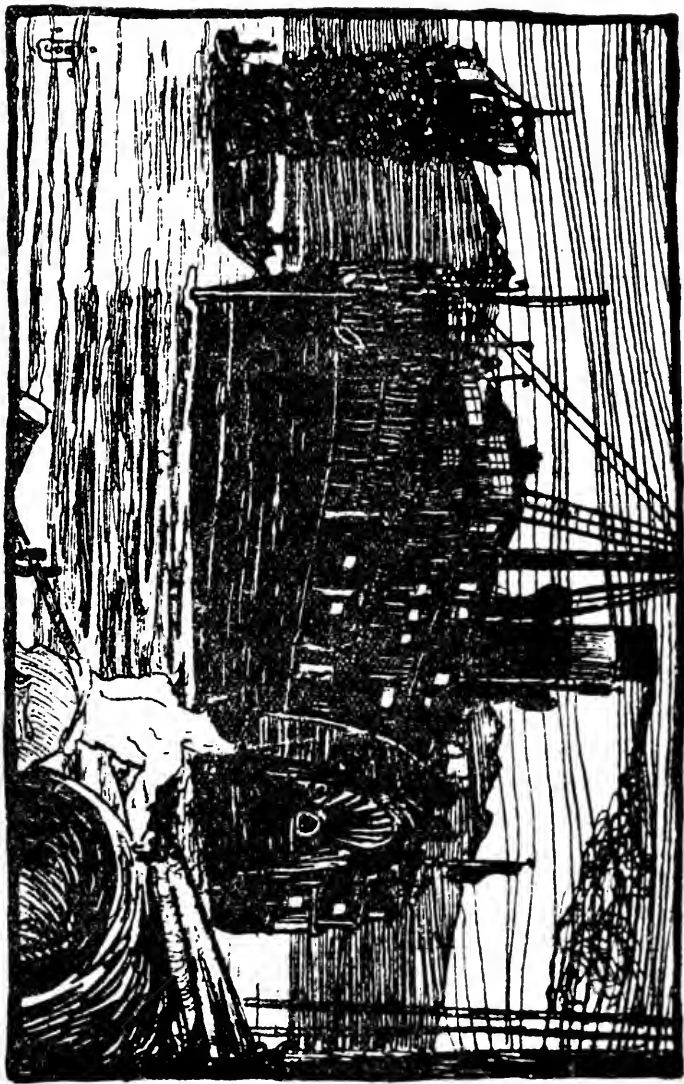
It was a restless, irritated soul that looked out, with sense of injury, from the eyes of the new patient upon the little white-walled room, that eagerly questioned the house surgeon as to the probable length of this affliction, and that murmured unceasingly against such undeserved buffets of destiny. For in his forty years of rough and tumble in the Far East, the Gods had greatly spared Terence. He had never known sickness nor had ever been anything but a rough-voiced, tough-skinned mariner of the cheery "old China-hand" school.

And now, just as the end of all his work had been won; when his savings, added to a bit of lucky speculation, had brought old Ireland and leisure out of dreamland into reality; when at last he was heading straight for home where Norah, the wife, was awaiting him, with little Nell that he had 'nt seen "since she was knee-high," to be thus smitten—well might he murmur against the high Gods. "Is it at such a time as this doctor, I ask ye, that a strong man should be getting sick, at all? Perdition take the soul of yon black-livered German that puts me ashore to be here when every day was bringing me nearer home! Ah now, nurse, can't you see I'm better?—and d'ye think I will be able to be up before the next mail leaves?" And thus, restlessly fighting the foul fiend, haunted with one fixed idea to get well quickly and away, he saw the long summer days grow, wearing to a week and then a fortnight.

They were all very good to him in the passenger ward, for there was something more than usually pathetic in the helplessness of this strong man who had never known a sick-bed, and whose soul was longing for the home he had not seen since boyhood. Nurse Edith bore his fretfulness with something more than her usual wondrous patience; Perez, the visiting surgeon, would look in oftener than the regulations required, with a cheery smile and an optimistic interpretation of the day's record. Even the dainty Lady Superintendent, with hair and eyes that brought into the room a breath as of English spring, could find time to sit with the petulant mariner, distracting his mind from monomania; and a convalescent Boer prisoner from the adjoining ward, inarticulate but friendly, spent many hours playing his national anthem and other mournful melodies on a wheezy accordion, in a kindly attempt to soothe and cheer.

Gradually, after the first week of illness and as high fever undermined his keen vitality, there came to Terence something of acquiescence in his lot, resignation that was almost apathy in so strenuous a soul. It seemed to him that the dull routine of the hospital ward had come to be—nay, had always been—part of his life; this unbroken round of slops and brandy, doctors' visits, temperature charts, icebags and nurses, had been his since the beginning of time—Manuel, the Tamil boy, who washed him morning and evening and

"JOINT TRIPS IN THE OLD PILGRIM."





sponged his shrunken frame at intervals when the fever raged fiercely, surely he had known these ministrations since the beginning of time? More and more dreamy and remote became his thoughts of the old house by the river at Coleraine. Life seemed to have dimmed suddenly in that direction and to be centred here, his attention rivetted for ever on the nurses' soft footsteps or, in their absence, on the doings of a grey squirrel that lived in a banyan tree opposite.

All sights and sounds of the daily hospital routine bled themselves into his consciousness as part of the eternal order of things: dawn, heralded by sleepy voices of jackdaws in the palms and twittering of swallows in the eaves; then the old night watchman, stirred to activity in expectation of food and his approaching release; slow footfalls of coolies and gardener drowsily bestirring themselves to the day's work in the still, shadowed court; nurses from the planters' and childrens' wards comparing notes of the night, ready also for their relief;—these things had come to be the inevitable dawning of days that stretched back through aeons of years. They meant the coming of nurse Edith, and of her ever helpful hand. Then, marked off by sendings of food into six two hour watches, came the long stretch of daylight, its ebb and flow of fever and pain. Marking it at intervals of milestone regularity, came visits of surgeon and chaplain, the droning voice of a reader in the sailors' ward, and, beyond these, the Boer's daily service of hymns. Beyond these again, and forming, as it were, the perpetual motif of existence, was the ceaseless sound of wheels from the Fort road, the barking of pariahs, and lamentation of innumerable doves. Confronted by these realities the soul of Terence McMaus had made them his, to the exclusion of all else: so that the deck of the old "Pilgrim," the labours, friendship and memories of the China Coast became merged and blurred into remote distance.

Of Norah and little Nellie he spoke often at first, keenly anxious about their anxiety, since a telegram had been sent them; but as the long days wore on, they too became part of the shadowy distance which had gone before this eternity of hospital silence and shade. Indistinctly he felt that they were there, waiting for him, and that he

could not go,—but the burden of the thought gradually faded into insignificance as compared, for instance, with the terrors of a certain piano strenuously attacked each day towards sunset in a bungalow across the road, or the persistent cawing of a jackdaw in the eaves. The latter could be dealt with—Manuel spent much of his time in stoning raucous-voiced birds—but to realise that every evening must bring again the same nerve-racking mutilation of the “*Virgin’s Prayer*” or Sousa’s marches, made each afternoon a time of hideous expectation, to the point of shutting out all other thoughts.

Then came a day, after three weeks of illness and a crisis of which Terence knew nothing, when nurse Edith informed him that he was getting better. Terence grunted, asked when he might expect to have something decent to eat and suggested that he would like to sit up. Proceeding to do so, however, he collapsed ignominiously, and thereat burst into tears. Next came a telegram saying that Norah and little Nell were on their way out; he professed annoyance at needless expense, but reckoning the progress of their journey proved a healthier form of mental activity than counting the barks of pariahs or gekkotrails on the ceiling. Thereafter he took a steadily increasing interest in the subject of food supply, renewing daily his acquaintance with long forgotten triumphs of the culinary art, such as boiled eggs, coffee and minced chicken. And daily, as these miracles had their effect, the old life loomed up again out of the mists, and day-dreams came peacefully to him as he lay and listened to the land-breeze rustling in the palms, day-dreams of familiar faces and jolly trips in the old “*Pilgrim*.” Through long drowsy afternoons he sailed again the broad waters of the great river, wherein all the best of his life’s pictures were framed; saw again the teeming life of busy tea-seasons, and the haze of summer heat shimmering off the sides of the old hulk at Hankow; all the sights and sounds of the river came back, seeming the fairer in their distance,—the ports of call with their never-ceasing song of laden coolie gangs, long silent reaches where the hogdeer stood by the waters’ edge on summer evenings, and where wild-fowl rose in thousands from the “*Pilgrim’s*” bows on winter nights. Terence was convalescent; the house surgeon cautiously

admitted that in three or four weeks he would be fit to travel again.

"That'll just be right, doctor; give the wife time to have a look around and teach me to walk; and then we'll all be off together. And not sorry to go, doctor, for all you're so decent to me!"

* * * * *

It was Sunday evening and the passenger ward lay hushed in the grateful enjoyment of a cool breeze that followed close upon a stifling day; dinner was over and the night nurses had gone their first round. In a little while would come shaded lights, sleeping draughts and the last entries on the day's record. Hardly a sound broke upon the stillness; the Boer prisoners' evening hymn had ceased, leaving behind it a vague sense of oppression, a note discordant in a world that should have been all harmony. Now and again the weak, quickly-hushed cry of a baby in the childrens' ward came with its petulant message of pain.

Number Three was restless. The steamer bringing Norah and little Nell was due to arrive to-morrow, and the results of his impatience had been marked by a slight increase of temperature; nothing to worry about, but sufficient to suggest to the house surgeon an addition of bromide to the sleeping draught. Also, noting that the wind was backing landwards from the sea, Antonio, the night watchman, and the ward-nurse were warned to shut the windows should a storm come up in the night, as indeed seemed likely. Antonio, for greater safety, was placed on duty by the door. And soon Terence, protesting that he could not sleep, yielded to the strong captain of dreams.

Now, the night nurse was a pretty little thing of the Dutch-Portuguese-Cingalese type of silliness, brought down recently from one of the hill stations. She cared nothing for hospitals now, for was she not to marry Thompson, the young tea-planter, in a few months? So after the midnight round she settled herself comfortably to sleep in the verandah, bidding Antonio call her if necessary. And Antonio, being aged and very weary, found the example to his liking. The night

had become sultry; in the wards the patients, having thrown off their blankets, tossed in restless sleep. And so it came about that at three o'clock, roused by vivid lightning, the nurse awoke. Rain, cold-driven from the hills, was beating through the verandahs from the north and west and the voice of Number Three was calling loudly, full of irritation and a sense of wrong. Rubbing her eyes, she stumbled through the dark passage, arousing Antonio from his stertorous slumbers on her way to the bedside. Even to her unskilful eye there was something wrong; the patient had evidently caught a chill; his temperature was high and his teeth chattered. The cold wind had come suddenly, to find him, bathed in perspiration, fast in the deep sleep of narcotics.

Had she not been a silly little thing—and a good deal frightened—she would have called up the house surgeon. As it was Terence got a change of pyjamas, his blanket, and another draught (the last based upon general instructions as to sleeplessness). This time Antonio, having closed the windows, remained by the bedside, grumbling at the labour involved in tending white men in general and Number Three in particular.

* * * * *

Mrs. McManus and her daughter had breakfasted at the Grand Hotel, made cheerful by the doctor's report which had met them on board the night before, and had driven out along the road where Terence and the bullock ambulance had passed six weeks ago. As they turned in at the Hospital garden nurse Edith came out to meet them. No introduction was required; hardly a question asked. Her eyes alone, without the hushed voice and tearstained face, would have told them the truth. As they reached the passengers' ward, the doctor came into the verandah: Mrs. McManus took the silently proffered hand.

"Are we in time, doctor? Oh, what could have happened?"

"Ladies, you must be brave,—come this way please. He is still conscious, but cannot last long. A sad relapse, and very sudden."

As they came to the bedside, Terence looked up. His voice came low and jerkily:—"Ah, Norah, you've come at last,

and you've brought me little Nell. I knew ye'd be here soon. Why, the girl's bigger than yourself, mother. Don't ye be crying, Nell, girl. Nurse, give me some brandy. You were'nt quite right about my getting up this week, I'm afraid. Norah, she said"

Nurse Edith laid her cool fingers on the parched lips and shook her head, for silence. The doctor led Mrs. McManus to the open window; there, as the truth burned itself into her consciousness, the picture of the banyan tree glistening with the night's rain became a haunting memory to her for all time. And so, through the fierce heat of the day, hoping faintly against hope, they waited; while the inexorable routine of hospital duties ran its appointed course. At sunset the end came. Strong with the last brilliance of a flickering light, Terence sat up and looking beyond those bare white walls, saw again the great river rolling yellow to the sea.

"Eighteen feet on the bar,—Quarter master, hard aport! Full speed ahead!" Thus passed Terence McManus.



ON THE HEARTLESSNESS OF CREATION IN GENERAL

[A SOLEMN THOUGHT]

If you remember, Wordsworth thought it hard
When Mary, wretched girl, had shuffled off
Her mortal coil (sad victim of a cough) ;
He thought it wrong, I say, that no regard
Was shown thereto by this insensate world ;
It paid no heed to Mary's swift demise,
But bore her onward, as it calmly whirled
Into the depths of space, with rocks and trees,
This irritated Wordsworth at the time,
And he complained, as usual, in rhyme.

In my far-distant salad days, to me
It seemed that Wordsworth always brought to mind
Some agèd sheep tied bleating to a tree :
But latterly, d'you know, I've been inclined
To look at matters in a similar way,
To curse this beastly callous world that goes
Revolving on its axis once a day,
Regardless of my obvious needs and woes,
I hate to think, when all things go contrary,
This planet cares no more for me than Mary.

•In my Salad Days•



ANTONIA VERSUS STRINDBERG

Antonia and I have had a few words. Accordingly she has gone to bed with a "sick headache" and I am having my dinner at the Club. Plenty of married men dine at the Club, but the boys eye me suspiciously and seem to guess that I have had a row. I wish it had never happened—for a woman convinced against her will is as impervious to arguments as

ever. I don't believe, for that matter, that Antonia was convinced at all; and in any case I shall have to apologise to-morrow and say I was a brute; that is the inevitable ending to words with Antonia. Any row is bad, but a useless row is silly.

It is all Strindberg's fault. If he had not written that article in the *White Review* I should not have read it, and consequently I should not have been provided with the facts and figures which sent Antonia to bed. And yet Strindberg is a fine fellow; his arguments are powerful as sledge-hammers; his facts adamant, and his logical conclusions irrefutable. Then, too, his name carries with it the certain weight of an established reputation; as a philosopher and thinker on social questions his right to attention cannot be gainsaid. My wife admitted that much before I began to read

the article, and said he was a greater authority as regards the sex than Montegazza—and therefore, when I found in his pages all the arguments that I have been instinctively longing for these last two years, the temptation to use them was more than flesh and blood could resist.

For two years I have been a victim of the "New Woman" movement—not a hopeless, agonised victim, perhaps, but still a victim, unwilling and defenceless. There are



millions more, I know, in the same plight at this moment: millions of quiet, peace-loving married men bearing up under the pressure of a daily-growing burden; men who would not hurt a fly, meeting in silence and shame the reproachful looks of woman, down-trodden and evilly ill-treated; men with a keen sense of honour, who smart under the burning words of woman too long oppressed and now at bay. I am one of these; and, as one, I hail the advent of Strindberg as Andromeda hailed Perseus of old.

Antonia reads a good deal of the trash which nowadays passes current for literature, and she has devoured all such recent productions of the "advanced woman" school as, floating on the tide of a meretricious popularity, have reached this backwater of civilisation. Happily their number is largely reduced by distance and we are spared the cheaper railway station imitations. But these books, such as they are, have left a deep mark on her mind, such as it is. The *Heavenly Twins* began it, giving shape, she said, to many unformulated ideas that had till then been latent somewhere at the back of her consciousness—ideas of man's tyranny and of a season ripe for rebellion against that evil burden borne on woman's shoulder from the beginning of time. Then came the *Yellow Aster*, adding an unsavoury but powerful stimulant to the growth of these unhappy germs. Next it was *Wreckage*, pungent and strong meat; but the germs thrived on it and grew livelier. *Dodo* and *Keynotes*, *Discords* and *Ideals*, with half a dozen other works of a similar kidney, completed the process of my wife's mental development and brought her to that state in which she at present rejoices.

Now I have no objection to her—or any other woman—holding any views she likes, especially if she arrives at them by a *bonâ fide* process of thought. Liberty of opinion I hold to be as good for Antonia as it is for me, and a thing to be encouraged. I don't like your woman, your average woman, who inherits all her ideas from her mother and is incapable of altering one of them. I am quite willing that Antonia should arrive at any conclusions she chooses with regard to the perfidy and baseness of the male human in general. But I distinctly object to the *argumentum ad hominem*—i.e. myself—with which she points and applies her arguments. That is,

however, a feature of feminine logic; it descends invariably from the general to the particular—and it is usually extremely offensive. The resentment which rankles in Antonia against the injustice of man in general must have an outlet; she must deliver her soul—and it would seem that Providence has appointed me unto that end. Her forces act like those of any other undirected body, in the line of the least resistance. I suppose it is natural, but it does not conduce to harmony.

Over our domestic and once happy fireside she has of late insisted on reading to me the choicest quotations from the exponents of woman's advanced creed. I have been saturated with extracts of Sarah Grand and my soul has turned in loathing from the imaginings of George Egerton. As she reads, Antonia turns on me eyes full of the reproof of centuries, and as I sit there alone, unprotected, to answer for all the crimes of man at the bar of outraged female opinion, my usual powers of argument leave me and I hang my head, like any convicted felon. Under the combined lashes of Antonia and Sarah, I am mute. Or rather I was, until Strindberg came to the rescue.

Gallant Strindberg! Born out of the fulness of time, the deliverer of his sex borne down by the raucous voices of the shrieking sisterhood. I found him a week ago at the Club; I read him in one glorious half hour of ecstasy and relief, and having read, I bore him home to read again and inwardly digest. And this afternoon I gave Antonia, in small doses and gently, Strindberg "On the Inferiority of Woman."

Strindberg has got his subject down to a fine point. Beginning with the structural and physical disabilities of woman, playing relentlessly through the entire gamut of her shortcomings, he proves historically, categorically and plainly her condition of hopeless and eternal inferiority. He is not what one would call polite, and I should imagine him to be an unpleasant sort of man at a small tea party—but after two years of advanced women's utterances I find him extremely refreshing. There was a time when I would have avoided Strindberg; now he is welcome as the Great Twin Brethren before the walls of besieged Rome.

"Woman," he says, in a preliminary scientific indictment to which Antonia listened in mute astonishment, "shows

in her structural and mental weaknesses, many points of resemblance with the child and the negro. Her blood is a weak and diluted compound, and her spine shows far more evidence of a caudal appendage than that of man." (Here my wife grew distinctly restive). "Her skull too is an inferior article and the grey matter of the brain is not so dense as in the male."

"There I agree with him," said Antonia. "If density of brain is to be a sign of superiority we cannot compete with you."

"Only as regards the grey matter, I replied. "Grey matter and grey hair are, it appears, signs of wisdom equally rare in your sex. But do not let us discuss it, my dear; the article is well worth your attention, and interruptions will only lose us the thread of its argument."

"Her nervous system," continues Strindberg, "is similar to that of the savage, capable of supporting great physical pain but lacking in moral courage to do so."

"Brute," said Antonia.

"Like the savage she displays a tendency to servile imitation." (my wife takes in several ladies' papers) "lack of initiative, fear of solitude, and lastly an immoderate love of dance and movement, all characteristics to be found in Bushmen and babies."

"What absolute nonsense," snorted Antonia. "fear of solitude indeed—it is the one thing we ask, the greatest blessing."

"Antonia," I said gravely "will you let me read Strindberg or will you not? Yesterday I listened respectfully to a long article on women's clubs: surely that very fair play of which you are always talking should make you give a hearing to the other side of the question?" Antonia subsided.

"The so-called higher qualities of woman," proceeds the philosopher, "do not bear a searching analysis—of sequence of ideas in her mind there is but little evidence; her impressionability, of which we hear much, is merely that of the child; her hysterical and passionate outbursts when thwarted are the true equivalents of a child's kicks and screams; her power of concentration——" But here Antonia interrupted again. "I'm never hysterical," she said, "and it's perfectly absurd."

"My dear," I remarked, "Strindberg is not writing about you. One of the chief weaknesses of your sex lies in its inability to consider any question impersonally: you invariably descend to the individual case. With regard to hysterics I will admit that you form one of those exceptions which prove the rule, but Strindberg——"



"OH! BOTHER STRINDBERG."

"Oh, bother Strindberg,—what does he know about it? Love of dance and movement, indeed! I suppose you men don't care for dancing? You only do it to oblige us eh? Why, only yesterday——"

"Antonia," I said gently, "you are simply confirming Strindberg's remarks. *Ex pede Herculem.*"

Now I admit that I shouldn't have said that. If there is one thing my wife can't stand it is a quotation in one of the dead languages: she would sooner hear any offensive remark in English (which is natural, because she could then continue the argument).

"Oh, you needn't talk about Hercules, especially if it isn't fit to say in English. Really, Charles, I should think you would be ashamed If that's all Strindberg can teach you——"

"His best points," I said, "are to come. Listen here! The complete success of the advanced woman movement would end in chaos. Feminine emancipation is a chimera—an evil dream. Woman, if she wants equality, must drag man down to her level, for she cannot rise to his. She is but the complement of man. Alone she is useless, but as his *alter ego*——"

This was Strindberg's Latin, not mine, but it filled Antonia's cup to overflowing. What she said I will not repeat, but the thread of her argument descended with extreme rapidity from the general to the particular, from Strindberg to me. "And now," she said, at the conclusion of ten minutes' glorious and indignant eloquence, "you've made my headache with your horrid Strindberg, and you've only yourself to thank for it. I am going to bed." And she went.

I wish I had never read Strindberg. But he is a fine fellow, for all that.

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A VIGIL

The bell-mouthed clock gives forth the hour of three
Unto a silent world. All things are hushed
In depths of balmy sleep: no errant step
Of reveller goes homeward down the Bund.
No anxious ricksha, crawling for a fare,
Both mar the perfect stillness of the night
Nor steady tread of heavy-booted Sikh
Breaks on the silence. [Bobby is asleep]

I am alone—alone, one waking thing
In all this transeèd city of repose.
Lo, at my window now I stand and gaze
Into the vast unfathomed depths of space,
And all my soul is filled with wild regret.
Let others sleep whose dreams are not of thee.
Mine eyelids will not close upon the thought
Of all thy loveliness and all thy charm.
Alas, we twain are parted evermore.
Henceforth our paths lie separate—alas!
To think upon thee as thou wert last night
Is anguish sore. Thy witching scarlet robe,
The mute appealing of thy full dark eye,
These are the memories which mock the thought
That I have bid farewell to thee and thine.
A long, last, sad farewell! Thy Siren charm
Is sweet, but mortal: he, whose eager lips
Have tasted of that sweetness, knows remorse
Swift and full-measured. Now some other man
Can have my share of thee, thou crayfish of Japan!

A SHANGHAI BANK HOLIDAY



My idea of a holiday being a day of rest and enjoyment, I was glad to find that there was to be no trip to Pootoo, or anywhere else, that first of July; naturally, if there had been, I should have joined it; Jorkins and Straddle had booked me as a matter of course, and I never have the strength of mind to live up to my convictions on these occasions. There seems to be an unwritten law amongst Englishmen, that if Providence allows the dull round of toil to be broken for a day, the opportunity must be used either to kill something or to knock a ball about, or to go out in a boat, and it requires a brave man to go against popular opinion in this matter.

Being a broker, and a hard-working man at that, I get quite enough exercise and movement as a rule in the pursuit of my daily bread; and my idea of a holiday, especially at this time of year, is one of absolute unbroken laziness; a day wherein I may rise, dress, eat and drink, untrammelled by the ordinary fetters of routine; a

day of sloth and many cigars, of *kimonos* and carelessness, of *dolce far niente* and irresponsibility. This was the holiday I had pictured to myself during the last muggy fortnight of my perspiring trade; this was the vision that had cheered me waiting at bank managers' doors or quoting monotonous rates to grumpy, irresponsible taipans—and this, I thought, was to be my portion when the idea of the Pootoo trip collapsed. But man proposes and all sorts of things dispose.

As a matter of fact, I know of no place better fitted by nature than Shanghai in summer for the realisation of a perfect bank holiday; not one of your Rosherville-Hampstead orgies, but a leisurely apotheosis of lotus-eating idleness. In the first place there is nowhere to go to; no trains are here to carry perspiring crowds to undesirable resorts of cheap

trippers: no damp woods or mouldy ruins offer themselves as an excuse for hideous flirtation picnics. And if they did, the weather would soon knock all that sort of thing on the head. Truly, as Horace said of a spot similarly blessed, *angulus ridet*—no place on earth is more ideally suited to that *otium cum dignitate* whereunto aspired a higher standard of culture than ours. A July bank holiday in Shanghai lacks only the soft bank and the unsophisticated shepherdess: but as it is, no man can put it to any of the base utilitarian uses that make it the evil thing it is elsewhere.

When I explained these things to my wife and showed her in what manner I proposed to celebrate this particular Bank Monday she cordially endorsed my way of looking at it. Further, she said that anything was better than one of those horrid trips to Pootoo—jambores she called them—her idea of these health excursions being compounded of cocktails, poker and general chaos. Therefore it was agreed between us that I should sleep till it suited me to awake, and thereafter be undisturbed, by hostile or friendly, till I had steeped my very soul in the waters of sloth. And Adolphus was not to have the freedom of my sanctum till called for. Adolphus is our firstborn and only.

That was the ideal; the reality was a horse of another colour. My castle in Spain, under the stern finger of fact, became an unpleasant abode. I don't say that it was anybody's fault, it was only part of the cursedness which always affects human calculations.

Monday, as may be remembered, dawned in fierce sunrise. I noted the fact myself, for the coolie had left one blind open opposite my bed, and at five o'clock I got up, sleepily wrathful, to shut it. As I looked out over the race course towards the city, I remembered the poet's lines:—

"The day that breaks in fire shall die in storms
Even though the noon be calm."

"Well," thought I to myself in drowsily happy anticipation, "the evening can take care of itself; my noon shall be calm anyway." And I went back to bed.

At seven o'clock or thereabouts, at that time when a man sleeps with a semi-consciousness of his luxurious state

proceeding from one blessed forty winks to another fifty. I was recalled to a world of sordid cares by a most appalling din, which, even in my drowsy state, I knew proceeded from the kitchen. Beginning with the usual loud arguments that denote a question of cash, it grew quickly into fierce clamour mingled with shrill squealing of women; then came hideous epithets and the reviling of ancestors; finally blows, a turmoil of voices, and sounds as from a pig in agony. Whereat I rejoiced, now wide awake, being thereby assured that I was not the only sufferer in the business. As far as I was concerned they might settle it among themselves, inquest and all: this was my bank holiday. I was in bed, and breakfast time was not yet—but I knew that in a few minutes Matilda would drag me into the affair, which she did, regardless of our pact, and I arrived on the scene in time to find the cook with both mafoos on his chest, in a state of coma. He has since gone to a hospital at Ningpo.

That is the worst of a holiday for the masses. Satan will find something congenial for them to do. If the mafoos had had to get the trap ready, and prepare for the usual day of furious driving, they would probably have left their grudge against the cook unsettled. However, I fined them both a dollar and went back to bed, my temper somewhat mollified by the thought that I had made something thus early in the day, which does not occur often.

But I was not going to be done out of my ideal for all that, and once more I sought the darkened room and sleep. There was an exposition of it upon me, as Bottom says, not to be stifled by the taking off of a dozen of cooks.

I was dozing off when Matilda came softly in, a note open in her hand. "Oh, George," she said (not waiting to ask if I was awake), "I'm so sorry—but what was I to do? I couldn't keep them waiting till you got up, and I couldn't say we'd go till I'd asked you about it." I said nothing, but I knew instinctively what was coming. She waited a minute or so. Then it came.

"George dear, the Stukeley's have asked us to tiffin with them, as a great favour" (they live next door). "You see they've got up a small party to meet Mrs. O'Malley, and at the last minute the Vernons can't come, and it spoils their

whole party, you know. We'd better go George, I think—don't you? You're never very civil to the Stukeley's, and its just as well to be. He could give you a lot of business."

Alas for my beautiful dream! Here was an end to the airy fabric. The broker's life is not a bed of roses, but its thorniest bits arise from the fact that Matilda and my conscience are always telling me to be civil to impossible people. And here, my lotos day, my day of scant clothes and no conventions, was to be sacrificed on the altar of the Stukeleys—Stukeley, who drinks hot water at his meals and can only talk diet and digestion; and Mrs. Stukeley, who has strong views and a weak mind. It was too dreadful. But it had to be, and though I struggled a bit, it was more from habit than from any hope of escape.

After that there was no more prospect of joyfulness—Stukeley had murdered sleep. From my verandah I could see him on his, gloating in the knowledge of my ruined day. And in my heart were fierce bloodthirsty thoughts against the tyranny of that evil letich, society.

After breakfast shroffs came; not one or two, but in bands, knowing, as they explained, that to-day I was at home and therefore more accessible to argument than when driving around town with no fixed address. After an hour of their soothing visits Matilda admitted that the Pootoo trip had certain advantages which she had not realised in the past. (This was after a little row over a milliner's account). Finally I had to explain to an unpaid majority that this was a holiday and that it is contrary to our custom to do business on such occasions.

A book and a cigar seemed then the best way of soothing my mind and preparing it for Stukeley's tiffin—but even the satisfaction of these mild joys was attended by continual excursions and alarms. The gardener had been stealing something or other, and Matilda took advantage of my presence, as she said, to frighten him; then her tailor came, and I spent a quarter of an hour measuring various pieces of cloth, which, thanks to this precaution, he was to put rather to her uses than to his. These things I did, calmly enough; my whole nature too numb, under the impending burden of Stukeley, to worry about lesser evils. Nevertheless, I was conscious of a

feeling that, as a holiday, the day was a conspicuous failure; and I wondered too whether Matilda was always waging this futile warfare against the surrounding natives. But I didn't ask—in such matters, ignorance is bliss.

Well, we went to Stukeleys—as terrible a tiffin party as ever I sat down to—of which the less said the better. Their entertainments are usually something between a missionary meeting and a March hare's party, but on this occasion I sat next a fat woman in a green dress, who talked babies and clothes *ad nauseam*—the sort of woman whose talk fills cemeteries. And after tiffin it rained, and everything was sticky, and we argued about bimetallism and last Sunday's sermon. I don't quite remember what became of the rest of that holiday—but I know it was not spent in the soul-steeping dignified calm that I had fondly dreamt of. As far as I recollect I went to the club in a ricksha, where several other fellows were celebrating the occasion; and the rest of that afternoon and evening are not engraven on the tablets of my memory. But the poet was right about the day "dying in storms"—Matilda looked after that.



TO OVIDE MUSIN

[A SONNET]

Master of music ! when thy magic bow
 Kisses the strings to rapturous harmonies,
 Soft echoes of Life's happiest memories
Come at thy bidding. Gentle winds that blow
Through April orchards glad with minstrelsy
 Of song-birds ; streams that linger on the way
 Through half-forgotten meadows ; dawn of day
By the still margin of a summer sea,
These, and the breath of fragrant pine-woods dim,
 Are with us, while from out the kindly past
 Come to us voices sweeter than the vast
Re-echoing notes of some cathedral hymn—
For with such magic is thy music fraught
That all life's littleness and cares are naught.



It is a fact which seems to have escaped the attention of naturalists that Chinese hens, or rather perhaps I should say the hens of Chinese, always lay stale eggs. Like everything else in this country, the native egg is born tired. All house-keepers agree on this point—a fact which in itself is significant. The produce of the native fowl, as purchased by the native cook, is of the same order as that which London grocers retail on Saturday nights as "French—7d. a dozen." It is good enough for an omelette at a pinch, and passable under other disguises, but by no means to be taken *à la coque* by persons of weak stomach.

This is undoubtedly a grievance at breakfast time, and an ever present source of reproach to thrifty goodwives: but, as the poet rightly sings, "it is better to bear the ills we have than to fly to others that we know not of." In this case I speak with knowledge—*eggs porta credi*—for we have recently gone through the experience of keeping domestic and, so-called, laying hens. They are now laid to rest.

It is useless to expostulate with a native as to the savour of an egg. He likes it with a "twang" to it: therefore it is that he keeps it for two or three weeks after its first appearance: he does not recognise the existence of any other taste in the matter: and, besides, there is always a possibility of the market strengthening with the egg. For his own use, a month to six weeks' keeping vastly improves it: and if he is a man of substance he buries it in spring and digs it up again for use in the autumn. It is an ancient people and liketh ancient things.

But my wife and the cook disagreed on this subject, and there went forth a fiat that we were to keep our own hens. Little did I know what that fiat meant (probably the cook

did ; he had been there before), so I got in a contractor and had a hen-house built, on scientific and sanitary principles, with a run attached and neat little boxes for the fowls to lay in. That cost fifty dollars.

Then we got four dozen hens, all matronly-looking birds, and certified by their late owner to be habitual and chronic layers. My wife bought two books on poultry, and proceeded to feed the birds on a diet which should by rights have drawn eggs from a stuffed owl, and every morning the coolie rummaged every box for eggs. Result, *nil*.

This went on for a fortnight, until my wife insisted that there was fowl treachery at work :—the cook was coming by night and removing the produce of our farmyard. So I got a patent combination lock for the hen-house, and set it hopefully to the word "fresh." After that, for three weeks, I had to get



"COOLIE TALKEE NO GOT EGG"

up every day and open that hen-house at 5 a.m. (because fowls must be let out at dawn), but as far as eggs were concerned I might as well have stayed in bed. The hens had struck work—struck on their very boxes.

I was, let me admit, beginning to weary of well-doing and to regret the old order of things, when an epidemic broke out amongst our hens. They took it cheerfully and died game, eating to the last, but every morning five or six corpses were dragged out of the hen-house by unsympathetic hands. The survivors sat around gaping in an idiotic way and evidently thinking of anything but eggs. We called in professional advice which (for two tacks) informed us that our hens had the "pip," and we bought, on the same advice, a large quantity of disinfectants. The hens ate the disinfectants and died quicker than ever. Eventually, when the destroying angel had passed, we found fourteen able-bodied birds on the roster. It may only have been a coincidence, but chicken-soup became less frequent on our menu when the epidemic ceased.

Then came an uneventful week, during which the fourteen survivors ate, drank and slept like the Romans in Capua. During this time they also got into the garden and scratched up all my seeds and seedlings. And every day the boy (grinning and without waiting to be asked) would report "coolie talkee no got egg." It was one day, at the end of that week, that we heard a great cackling just before daylight in the hen-house, and rejoiced exceedingly to think that the birth of an egg was at last being celebrated. All our troubles were now over, the future lay bright before us, and visions of breakfast eggs with yesterday's date on them, loomed up large as we listened to the joyful tumult. But the best-laid eggs gang aft agley! I went down to the hen-house as pleasantly excited as if I expected to find that the brave bird had laid a pearl of great price—but alas, for the horrid reality that awaited me. Some unknown animal of the weasel kind (the gardener said it was a "wild beast") had effected an entrance under the planks, and seven corpses bore silent witness to his thirst for blood. The other seven were still talking about it.

So we encased the hen-house in sheet-armour made from kerosene oil tins, and the seven sisters that remained—one was not a sister—became precious as the Sibylline books. For two solid months they continued to eat as much as they could hold without bursting, but the matter of egg-laying had apparently ceased to interest them. It is, however, a long laying that has no turning : and eventually one hen, evidently unable to

contain herself any longer, laid an egg. It wasn't much of a thing, but still it was a beginning, and we made a triumphal march through the garden, before taking it indoors and writing the date on it. Then my wife put it in a basket and sent it to a friend at the hospital.

That is the only one we ever got in return for three months of anxious toil and suspense. The effort was too much for that hen and it died—the cook said it wanted to sit and that we killed it by taking the egg away. This may or may not be the truth, but a hen that wants to sit on her first and only, deserves to die. (She was a French-looking bird, and evidently thought her work quite *un usât*.)

Yesterday I draw up a rough account of the cost of that egg, and my wife agreed, on the strength of it, to eat the other six hens forthwith and to convert their domicile into a potting-shed. The account is as follows :

One hen-house.....	\$50.00
Forty-eight hens.....	20.00
Disinfectants.....	3.20
Medical advice.....	2.66
Kerosene oil tins.....	2.50
Two books on poultry.....	3.50
Food, straw, cinders, etc.....	20.00
	<hr/>
	\$101.86

For this sum the cook would have supplied me with about twelve thousand eggs—such as they are. I conclude therefore that, as an experience, the home-production of new laid eggs, though interesting, is expensive and scarcely worth trying. But I should greatly like to know the arguments and expedients by which the native contrives to keep up a supply, however old, of this inaccessible article.

TO SYLVIA

[UNE AUBADE]

Sylvia, the dawn breaks softly from the sea
Decking with cloth of gold and grey the skies,—
Sylvia, awake, and greet the dawn with me!
All the sweet earth in new-born radiance lies,
Nought, nought is lacking to the perfect day
Save the last splendour of thy wondrous eyes.

Sylvia, long since, from out each leafy lair
The first blithe harbingers of day have stirred,
Hark, love, how gladly on the fragrant air
Lingers the morning song of warbling bird!
But, sweet, their melody is nothing worth
Till the dear music of thy voice is heard.

Sylvia, the earth is gay with flowers that greet
The dawning day. By every whispering rill
Where thou hast passed, the meadow-land is sweet
With dew-tipped eglantine and daffodil.
But, sweet, their beauty wastes itself in vain
If thou, earth's fairest flower, tarriest still.

The sun has kissed thy casement, love. Awake,
The world is full of joy for thy sweet sake!

THE SHOPPING OF IPHIGENIA

"Iphigenia," said I, "if you've no objection, I think I'll smoke a pipe outside."

Iphigenia looked up from a pile of miscellaneous drapery. "Oh, very well, James—if you like it. You'll be doing just as much good there as here,"—and she smiled.

Now, to the rather *blasé* young gentleman who was showing my wife (quite unnecessarily) how to spend our meagre income, the smile was doubtless an ordinary thing, but I had seen it before and knew better. That particular smile, reserved for use before strangers, is like the stormy petrel; it invariably means trouble ahead; it stands for curtain-lectures and a culprit (which is me) at bay. Also—another fact unknown to this weary youth—when my wife and I address each other as James and Iphigenia there is, so to speak, another depression advancing, Effie and Jim being the names we use on ordinary occasions and when the matrimonial sky is clear.

Had this young man not been a bachelor I should have attempted to argue the point with Iphigenia on the spot and to show her that I had a serious grievance; there is a certain freemasonry amongst married men, born of common experiences, which would have made such a course possible. But to discuss such matters before this *blasé* youth would simply have meant making the heathen to blaspheme. So, leaving the drapery department, I made my way to the street door and tried to extract comfort from a pipeful of navy cut.

Now, the matter was this. It was Saturday afternoon, and I had been looking forward all the morning to a round at golf with old Bough, for the weather was simply perfect. When, therefore, my wife asked me at tiffin to help her in choosing Xmas presents for the children and a few friends, I considered it extremely good of me to consent. I only did so because she seemed to think it absolutely necessary for her to

secure my presence—and the other presents—on that particular afternoon. But the fact remains: I gave up my golf and went shopping.

The difference between a man's shopping and a woman's, as a general rule, is that a man goes into a store for a certain thing, hoping he may find it there and get out again as fast as possible. A woman visits every shop on the street in turn to see if there isn't something in them that she might use either now or five years hence. She usually finds something, unless all her time is taken up in asking the prices of things she doesn't want or in talking to other ladies, similarly engaged. But at Xmas time conditions are slightly altered. At this season they know at all events, bless their hearts, that they want something, viz.—Xmas presents. The only thing that remains, therefore, for them to settle is, first, what they want, and, second, for whom? It was to assist in the answering of these questions that the pleasure of my company had been requested.

Personally, I object to Xmas, birthdays, anniversaries and all such occasions. Let the original causes of these events be what they may, their result is invariably and monotonously the same, *i.e.* a descent upon my pocket and a general cry for backsheesh. But the two dates that I have come to dread the most are my own birthday and Xmas. On the former joyful occasion my wife presents me with a silver tea-set or new drawing-room curtains—unpaid for; on the latter, she casts me for the part of Santa Claus to my family and half-a-dozen others, a rôle for which neither my instincts nor my means have fitted me. I think Xmas, take it all round, is the worst of these afflictions; for Society, by one of its silliest conventions, requires a man on that day to pretend he is enjoying himself even though he has a pain inside and the prospect of heavy liabilities outside. This, however, is a digression.

Iphigenia had, at my suggestion, drawn up a list (as long as my arm) of those persons on whom we were to shower *largesse*; and with this list we had set forth, blithely enough, after tiffin. First of all we had to buy about half-a-gross of Xmas cards. This to my mind seemed easy enough, especially since they had them in dozens, all different, and at reasonable prices—but a woman, I was informed, doesn't buy things like

that. No; she looks at the picture on each idiotic production, then reads the drivelling verse inside to see, first, if it matches the picture, and, second, if it is likely to make the recipient more than usually sick; then she buys two of each price in the shop, and finally rushes off to the next establishment "to see what they've got there"—and then *da capo*—whew! We were one hour and twenty minutes getting those cards.

Next came presents for half-a-dozen friends. My wife was quite decided that all the gifts must be different—I cannot yet see why—and she proposed going to three or four places and "looking about us" before making any final choice. So we went; and I may here remark that up till now I had kept a stiff upper lip and done my best to be a cheerful and interested spectator. In my mind's eye I could see old Bough making his cheery way from one "putting" green to the other, but I thrust the thought far from me and filled another pipe.

We had done two shops with a fair measure of success; that is to say, Iphigenia had bought four objects—all quite useless—to litter the rooms of four people who don't require them, when, as ill luck would have it, we came to Gullem and Stickm's. That popular emporium was crowded with ladies; not, as it turned out, because of the festive season, but by reason of a certain sale of "remnants." There was a long counter strewn with these gruesome objects, and along its entire length ladies—even ladies of my acquaintance—were grubbing and grabbing in a manner most unpleasant to witness. All the finer instincts of the sex seemed to have been temporarily lost in a fierce struggle for trimmings, chiffons, and other feminine specialities at a fraction under their ordinary price. I stood for a few moments fascinated by the horror of the scene.

"Here," said I, "is an instance of woman's lack of logic in domestic economy. Any one of these good souls will rush round here and fight for an hour to get a dollar off ten yards of stuff which, by the way, she doesn't really want at all. It is the same curious instinct which prompts her to buy cheap cigars and wine for her husband's friends, to bid for job lots at auctions and to ent the cook three cents on a lean fowl. She will do any of these things with a glow of housewifely pride, and then, in the same breath, she will pay a week's salary for

a hat or "confection" whose intrinsic value is represented by a bit of stuff, two feathers and a pin!" I turned to impress these things on my wife—she was gone! Immediately I recognised the situation, and seeking her among the remnants, I found her.

"Ellie," said I, "these aren't Xmas presents—not even for the Ladies' Benevolent. Come along; let's finish that list, and you can look over these things another day."

"Now Jim, don't be so stupid—another day! There won't be a thing left worth having on Monday." (By the way they were pulling them about this seemed likely enough.)

"But look here, dear, you've brought me out under false pretences. A man looks silly enough buying Xmas cards, but at a show of this sort he becomes simply out of place."

But Iphigenia was busy with a pile of spotted gloves and some furniture-fringe, and all my pleadings were in vain. After a few moments, therefore, of weak expostulation I made the remark with which this truthful narrative commenced.

As has been recorded, I went below and smoked that pipe, and after that another, but still the turmoil raged in the drapery department; now and again some panting woman, laden with spoils from the fray, would come to deposit them in her brougham and return swiftly to the onslaught. Seeing that the case was hopeless I eventually went to the club.

At dinner, to save time and tears, I admitted that I had been a brute. But I'm not going to choose any more of Iphigenia's Xmas presents.





EPILOGUE



Or as a yokel, homeward-bound
at night,
Shrill-voicing some untutored
rustic lay,
May, by his very artlessness,
make light,
For some belated traveller, the way.

EPILOGUE

As children lingering by a summer pool,
To while away an hour beside its brink,
Throw from the bank, far out into the cool
Still water, shells that glisten as they sink :

As strolling mummers on a village green,
Playing to scanty audience, slow-beguiled,
May leave perchance, where their poor booth has been,
Memories that linger for some simple child :

Or as a yokel, homeward bound at night,
Shrill-voicing some untutored rustic lay,
May, by his very artlessness, make light,
For some belated traveller, the way :

Thus have we played to you a little while
Our simple interludes of lightsome jest,
Winning at times the guerdon of a smile,
We too have thrown our shells : so let them rest.

Now 'neath the waters of your memory
They lie ; and some perchance who pass this way,
In years to come, shall pause awhile, and see
In them the glimmer of a bygone day.





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